

THE
ARMENIANS
IN THE
MEDIEVAL
ISLAMIC WORLD

PARADIGMS OF INTERACTION
SEVENTH TO FOURTEENTH CENTURIES



Volume One

The Arab Period in Armīnyah
Seventh to Eleventh Centuries

SETA B. DADOYAN

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I dedicate this book to my family, Arsen, Talin, and Daniel
and to my ancestors
the Barsoumians from the east and the Yaylayans
from the west of the
Armenian World

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9. Despising and Abusing the Cross and the Holy Icons
10. Indiscriminately Eating the Flesh of Contaminated Animals
11. Forbidding Wine as *Haram* (Forbidden)
12. Considering Washing with Water Purification of Sins
13. Despising Armenians for not Being Circumcised
14. Refusing to Apply the Fast of both the Old and New Laws
15. Banning the Meat of Animals Slaughtered by Armenians
16. Considering us Infidels, while Being such Themselves

Summary: The Arguments in Volume Three

Transliteration Tables

Arabic Transliteration			
ا	ā	ض	ḍ
ب	b	ط	ṭ
ت	t	ظ	ẓ
ث	th	ع	‘
ج	j	غ	gh
ح	ḥ	ف	f
خ	kh	ق	q
د	d	ك	k
ذ	dh	ل	l
ر	r	م	m
ز	z	ن	n
س	s	ي	i
ش	sh	ء	’
ص	ṣ		

Hübschmann-Meillet Transliteration

Hübschmann-Meillet	Sound: East. Arm/West. Arm	Armenian Letter
a	a	ա
b	b/p	բ
g	g/k (as in Gabriel/Ken)	գ
d	d/t	դ
e	ye/ye (as in <u>y</u> ard)	ե
z	z (as in <u>z</u> ink)	զ
ē	e (as in <u>a</u> ir)	է
ě	e (as in teacher <u>u</u>)	ը
t‘	t/t (strong, as in <u>t</u> ab)	թ
ž	zh (as in French Jacques)	ժ
i	i/i (as in <u>K</u> im)	ի

Hübschmann-Meillet Transliteration

l	l/l (as in <u>l</u> abel)	լ
x	kh/kh (as in Ri <u>ch</u> ter)	խ
c	ts/dz (as in He <u>rz</u> og)	ծ
k	k/g (as in ca <u>p</u> /goal)	կ
h	h (as in <u>h</u> am)	հ
j	dz/tz (as in Pi <u>zz</u> a)	ձ
ł	gh/gh (as in Bag <u>h</u> dad)	ղ
č	ch/j (as in ja <u>m</u>)	ճ
m	m/m (as in <u>m</u> ap)	մ
y	h/h (not spelled at the end of words)	յ
n	n/n (as in <u>n</u> ame)	ն
š	sh/sh (as in <u>sh</u> op)	շ
o	o or vo (as in <u>v</u> ortex)	ո
č'	ch/ch (as in <u>ch</u> op)	չ
b	p/b (as in pu <u>b</u> / <u>b</u> ook)	պ
ǰ	dj/ch (as in jo <u>b</u> /cho <u>p</u>)	ջ
ř	r/r (strong as in <u>R</u> obert)	ր
s	s/s (as in Sa <u>m</u>)	ս
v	v/v (as in va <u>u</u> lt)	վ
t	t/d (as in ta <u>i</u> lor/ <u>d</u> oor)	տ
r	r (light as in Tu <u>r</u> ner)	ր
c'	ts/ts (as in He <u>rz</u> egovina)	ց
w	u/u (light v used to produce French 'u')	ւ
p'	p/p (strong p as pa <u>s</u> s)	փ
k'	k/k (strong k as in <u>k</u> een)	ք
ō	o/o (as in o <u>p</u> en)	օ
f	f/f (as in fo <u>r</u> k)	ֆ

Western Armenian proper names of persons are written in the Western Armenian transliteration system, and not the Hübschmann.

Prologue

My initiative to study the Armenian experience in the medieval Islamic world through paradigmatic cases of interaction takes its beginnings in the Armenian condition in the Near Eastern region. It is best explained by Nietzsche's dictum *sum ergo cogito*, I exist therefore I think. Existential in many respects this questioning is also its motive and inner dimension. In this perspective writing about the history of Armenians in the medieval Islamic world means trying to make sense of the circumstances. It means an effort to create/define, rather, to recreate/re-define the historicity of the experiences. Being Armenian, almost universally, is having a mobile line of ethnic ancestry laden with narratives from the vast historic Armenian *oikoumenē* or habitat from Iran to Constantinople and from the Caucasus to Egypt. This study reflects, then, a questioning that a minimal level of concern about my Armenological Dasein, or my being an Armenologist requires. The condition of my generation of the 1960s in particular, meant growing up in trilingual and pluricultural communities in ancient cities of mosques, churches, *suks*, local and missionary schools, and eastern/western ideologies and folklores. Above all, it meant carrying a heavy luggage of vaguely perceived legacies, while learning/living in local and cosmopolitan networks of relations.

However, these and many other factors are not causes for crises, as long as one takes the environment as the ground of identity, no matter how compounded and peculiar it is. In other words, the Armenian condition in Near Eastern countries is not problematic in itself; it becomes so when isolated in a small enclosure such as the glass pyramid of the Louvre. Space/time takes the shape of the pyramid as opposed to and separated from outer space and real time. As far as the pyramid is concerned, the narrative of the classic histories is also a value theory or the "ethics" of being an Armenian. However, in real space/time this ethics lacks grounds in lived sensibilities, and epistemological criteria for its credibility. This is when the Armenian

condition becomes problematic, the scholarship in the pyramid a parody, and one's existence an unresolved matter. I existed and still do in these circumstances, therefore I must think, at least to clear the Armenian psyche of sedimentations and fixities.

As of the inception of this work over a decade ago, and throughout, the objective was to create a broad, inclusive, and definitely critical re-construction of the Armenian condition in the medieval Near East from the advent of Islam to the end of the Mongol period. For its proximity to the lived and recorded experiences, this new analysis of the Armenian condition had to be solid enough to stand out as an aesthetically more realistic, historically more accurate, philosophically more consistent, and intellectually more intriguing account.

For a task of these requirements the key was to identify the problematic aspects of the traditional narratives and constructs in circulation for centuries. I did not have to go too far or search too long to find episodes and texts that were paradigm cases for a different historicity, even for a counter-history.

Contrary to mainstream accounts, Armenian history is far from being monolithic. Several and often contradictory trends went into its making, yet the images in the narratives failed to reflect its rich texture and dynamics. Armenian–Islamic history—as a case study—was just one way of dealing with the problem. Also, the objective of my interest in the so-called sects is to draw the historicity of Armenian dissidence and what may be termed revolutionary elements on all strata and phases. The initiative to see these elements as part of the whole is novel and for some, even controversial. Surely, the book is not about interactions through dissident channels but dissidence was a channel of interaction. Also it does not focus on the dissident aspect of Armenian history, because that would betray its holistic logic.

The same can be said about the so-far marginalized question of Muslim Armenians. Their case is not a highlight but just part of the general argument to look at Armenian history from as many perspectives as possible. Several other subjects in the book, in turn discovered or brought up for the first time, demonstrate the multidimensional and interactive nature of the Armenian experience in the medieval Islamic and wider world. Things could have been—as they in fact were—very different than imagined, desired and told in traditional narratives. This is as much a historical as a deeply existential and epistemological issue, which is central to a project as ambitious as this book.

I began pondering over the extraordinary channels of interaction and their significance in Armenian history many years ago. I was a graduate student majoring in philosophy when I discovered that an obscure thirteenth-century Armenian manuscript was in fact a summary of the esoteric Epistles of the Brethren of Purity of the tenth century.

The broader project matured during a long period because I was venturing into uncharted territory. There were no studies and the task was hard, multifaceted, dangerous but challenging and overdue. The tools were an interdisciplinary training, a critical approach, and a taste for dialectics. After two decades of research, publication of two books and several papers on the theme of Armenians and Islam, the opus came together as an “argument” based on and structured by hitherto unnoticed or marginalized paradigm cases. Each one of these cases raised new questions and revealed new patterns of interaction and evolution in the medieval Near East.

The new knowledge that I excavated will hopefully lead to fresh ways and areas of inquiry in Near Eastern as well as Armenian studies. In its intent and rather unconventional content, this book is also a prolegomenon to writing Armenian history in the context of the Near East and to review things Near Eastern in their interactive aspects. It is supposed to suggest new outlooks and re-assessments in Islamic histories as well.

At this point, few notes about the sources and the structure or the aesthetics of the book are in order. The selection and use of sources were based on the necessities of the initial objectives, as stated earlier. The essential was the arrangement of a very large amount of data for a composition which, by its making, presented a new account of things Armenian as things Near Eastern. In the case of Armenian sources, in addition to contemporary sources, the focus was on primary sources. In the case of Arab sources, naturally all basic primary sources and texts were utilized. In fact most of the arguments and narratives are based precisely on their testimony.

In all detailed narratives, and there are many, the objective was to draw a general context for the reader to understand and have a feel of the period and the argument/s. The sources were selected in this light. Therefore, to keep the framework straightforward—especially for the reader who is not familiar with Armenian and/or Islamic history—I avoided debates on specific issues. This is not a detective’s initiative or report, and I am well aware of what some call “scholarship out

there.” I also deliberately avoided unnecessary bibliographic “embellishment,” if the material did not contribute to or was not actually used in the work. Already a very long and complicated text of many strands of arguments, this book could not carry parallel tracks of information. On the other hand, I have intentionally made use of certain details and ideas of relatively old sources such as Gibbon. This was to highlight a point, sometimes humorously, or open different channels of thought/imagination for the reader. After all, similar to all writing and reading, historical writing too is an aesthetic activity even when it focuses on critical thinking and analysis.

Since making causal connections was essential to the process of deriving and drawing the historicity of otherwise isolated and/or undetected paradigm cases or trends over seven centuries, the sequence of the episodes was an essential part of building the arguments. A chronological approach was the most appropriate means to construct the blocks and arrange the paradigms in the clearest possible composition. A thematic classification would have been not only confusing but would seriously impair the conceptual structure of the work.

A comment must be made about the multiplicity of themes and the content. The great range of interrelated themes may have justified a single and very large volume. It would have been architecturally more coherent, but the sequence and content of six parts made the division to three volumes so much more accessible and practical. The reader, however, should read the volumes as parts of a whole. The essential for me was the shaping and illustrating, or grounding of, arguments through paradigmatic cases. From the Prologue of Volume One to the end of Volume Three, a central argument and corollaries bridge the various episodes and issues.

The style in organizing the text and the problem of details must be commented on too. In view of my dialectical–holistic approach, also the objectives and the nature of the study, I did not and could not implement the common technique of maintaining a flowing narrative and keeping the details in the footnotes. Personally, I do not particularly enjoy reading texts of this style and in turn avoid imposing double levels of attention on the reader. The details are not just for information and evidence, as most traditionally trained historians take them to be. Details are part of the story and the argument(s) and if they have no relevance to the central themes, they must be excluded. As in Flemish and much later photo-realist arts, the fine details are *trompe l'oeil* elements to draw the viewer/reader into the “reality”

of the work. In other words, these details are necessary, not just as evidence but to assist the viewer/reader to try to think from within the narrative. Indeed I write as Chuck Close paints his very large portraits. The fine hair and minutest details on a face are not information; Matisse could tell a big tale with two or three strokes of the brush or with charcoal. Details are elements in a symphonic interaction with the image that is a construction or a composition anyway. This is my style of writing history and naturally it is shaped by the idea of the opus. Every piece of literature—including and especially a historical writing—is an artifact of sorts. It is a composition of many elements arranged in deliberate forms, order, sequence, proportion, dimension, detail, highlight, intensity, lines, colors, etc. As in the arts too, seemingly odd elements contribute to the making of the whole. Even though in a good piece of literature and art too, form, content, and subject are ideally one, form is always the key to the latter. I have composed and arranged the larger subjects and their subthemes in such a way as to create an open yet dynamic historic continuity that is closer to the Armenian condition and as such more intriguing. By its intent, form and content the book will hopefully stimulate a process of reevaluating everything, including itself, and re-conceptualizing Armenian and Near Eastern histories.

Introduction

I. Armenian Historiography and the Book as an Argument

Broader in scope and interdisciplinary in approach, this is not a book of history in the traditional sense, but it strongly suggests a different historical reading and thinking exercise. In form and content, this study in three volumes is written as an argument for and a prolegomenon to writing Armenian history in the Near Eastern context. My main argument is: If, since the seventh-century historic Armenia, from Asia Minor to the South Caucasus, as well as the modern Republic have been part of the Islamic world, and if until a few decades ago the entire region, from the Black and Caspian seas to the Mediterranean, including Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Egypt, was the habitat of most of the Armenians, their history too was naturally part of these locations and peoples. Armenians lived there as integral elements and their world was governed by more or less the same laws that governed the region. In elementary Newtonian terms, the law that makes the apple fall is the same that keeps the moon in orbit. In other words, since history has no secret pockets and private laws, things Armenian are also things Near Eastern and must be studied as such. This has not been the case and this is where this study takes its urgency and legitimacy.

In line with the initial argument, the re-conceptualization of the medieval Armenian experience within the context of cultural and political Islam is an immediate task. The ultimate aim is to draw the outlines of a new philosophy of Armenian history based on hitherto undetected or obscured patterns of interaction. Keeping the general chronology of events from the fourth to the end of the fourteenth century as background, the various themes in three volumes are paradigm cases of interaction on political, cultural, religious, philosophical, literary, even artistic levels. Surely, this is not a Socratic quest for the truth, but the exercise will at least clear sedimentations in historical writing.

The focus on the ongoing Armenian experience as part of the Near Eastern world will overcome an inherent Armenocentrism, which has inevitably created a dualism in Armenian historical writing. This is looking at all things Armenian as central and everything else peripheral. There is need for a Copernican step, which will shift this center from the Armenian into the Near Eastern universe and initiate a comprehensive project of re-evaluating the narratives.

As various camps in Armenian studies discern and occasionally debate differences in perspective, interest, methodology, and objectives, Armenian historians are gradually becoming more self-conscious and less Armenocentric. But there are still accumulated narratives and accounts that will have to be reviewed. The task demands a fusion of the disciplines of historiography, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, critical theories, psychology, linguistics, literature, arts, and many more. Surely, how various Armenologists think depends on their backgrounds and roles; but despite the recent proliferation of Armenian studies centers, institutional bias and politicization still seriously threaten to derail a process of critical reflection.

The critical and interdisciplinary approach adopted in this book looks at the Armenological market place, so to speak, at a phenomenological distance. The so-called objectivity claimed by some historians is problematic. It is a myth. There is always a transcendental and a priori grid of historical thinking, which precedes all types of writing. This grid may be an ideology, an agenda, or some other consideration. As is the case now, Armenian studies are and have always been embedded in cultural–political traditions. During the recent decades, several academics deliberately borrowed the beliefs and agendas of dominant institutions and political parties. Many drifted along believing that they were doing what they were expected to do as “authentic” Armenologists, such as concentrating on the later modern period and the Genocide.

Heideggerian authenticity does not very much apply here, but beyond these practices, to be an authentic scholar probably means to face up to one’s responsibility for what one’s career in Armenian studies adds up to. Today, in the aftermath of postmodern critique of historical writing, we can see that strictly conservative approaches seriously disrupted the discipline of Armenian history. The scholarship and the discipline of Armenian studies in general face serious problems, such as cultural traffic lights and institutional validations. Furthermore, in my opinion, among Armenians there has always been a deeply rooted and strong culture of authority. This is a tendency to

fix authority in all matters, even those of opinion. Once a subject or a figure and episode from any field manage or are chosen to gain the status of authority, they become references and the general public turns into an impenetrable wall around them. The victims of this tradition have always been the intellectual culture and the public itself. For many Armenians, the seeming security authority provides has had priority, and it has become almost impossible to break through and open all things Armenian to all other things. Furthermore, the institutional infrastructure of the Armenian environment still does not allow the development of a culture of experimentation and critical thinking.

At present everyone admits that primarily Armenian sources and interpretations may not and did not provide thorough accounts. Similar to Syriac and Byzantine sources, Arab sources are absolutely essential. Language cannot be the reason for shortcomings as well as success in using these sources. The causes are in the politics of Armenian intellectual culture to safeguard the classical framework and some foundational concepts. Surely there are several exceptions, as the reader will find throughout this work.

The point is that the Armenian experience in the medieval Near East is too diverse and complicated to respond to simplistic and quasi-epic constructs. Indeed, it is very difficult to trace a constant line of Armenian policy, ideology, or strategy, except mobility and flexibility in the different communities and places that sustained the continuity of the whole for centuries. Consequently, Armenian histories should reflect this condition and avoid essentialism. One of the oldest surviving pre-modern nations of their region, Armenians lived on its entire surface and beyond, closely interacting with peoples and their cultures. More importantly, the Armenian habitat extended from the historic land into the whole region and beyond, into Europe and recently the Americas. The patterns of cultural–political experiences were highly interactive, decentralized, and multidimensional. The communities everywhere evolved by the requirements of their habitats. Many episodes in medieval and modern Armenian history—mostly unstudied or thrown into oblivion—indicate to unexpected manners of interaction with and at times manipulation of the environment by Armenian individuals and factions. In fact, there exists a vast area of Armenian–Islamic *realpolitik* with Arabs, Turks, Persians, Kurds as well as heterodox Islam (such as Ismāʿilism). During the Soviet era the institutes and/or departments of oriental studies (*arewelagit'iwn*) in the Republic lumped together some modern Middle Eastern

research under the headings of the “brotherly relations between the peoples of the region” or “liberation struggles of the peasant and proletarian classes” in Arab countries. A more banal and folkloric category is “the contribution of Armenians to the social-cultural development” of a given country/period. Otherwise Armenian–Islamic interactions of fourteen centuries, the subject of this book, remain untouched. In scale and breadth, and perhaps for the first time this study initiates Islamic–Armenian studies as a new area in Near Eastern studies.

Every phase of Armenian political and cultural development therefore can only be understood in context and by contemporary tools. In turn, medieval Armenian history after the mid-seventh century can only be understood in the context of the Islamic world. This has not been the case. Any change in this situation will require a radical transformation in the way intellectuals think of themselves and their subject matter. Scholars in social sciences and humanities will have to develop a practice of thinking the unthinkable, of looking beyond the deep-seated presuppositions of what conventionally and almost naturally “passed for the truth,” as Nietzsche would put it.

Traditional dichotomies between disciplines are now abandoned by many in favor of the “deployment of a battery of techniques and insights from linguistics, literature, psychoanalysis, philosophy, history, and art criticism,” etc.¹ I strongly believe that the historian is primarily an interpreter and that history is not an exclusive discipline, as traditional historians still hold. It is through a process of conceptualization that all sorts of elements are transformed into so-called historical texts. This is a very intriguing and dangerous process. Historical narratives may create seemingly detailed accounts² that can be marketed as “facts,” and different narratives by different writers may give contradictory images as “facts.” In Armenian medieval histories, for example, it is very common to find elaborate yet contradictory reconstructions of the same episode. This is the nature of historical writing, it has always suffered of epistemological flaws and the historian must be aware of his/her predicament.

In another respect, the inspirational value of history can/should never be underestimated. It has priority for many. We also know that “inspirational” histories are also designed to achieve certain political objectives. As Lyotard says, narrative is “a kind of self-legitimization whereby constructing it according to a certain set of socially accepted rules and practices establishes the speaker’s or writer’s authority within

their society and acts as a mutual reinforcement of that society's self-identity.”³

Conceptualizing is the core of writing history and the self-reflexive historian knows that it is possible to offer an interpretation which, although not claiming to be a “true” narrative, may nevertheless be a more plausible account than the existing ones.⁴ The opening up of historical analysis to rhetorical interrogation is at the heart of contemporary thinking, which recognizes no distinction between history proper and philosophy of history.⁵ Armenian studies scholars are probably aware of this fact. At present, who or what is an Armenologist as an intellectual—a legacy of the Enlightenment—may mean being part of the traditional Armenian politics of truth or a critic of it, being part of the culture industry or its adversary and reformer. Many of the cases discussed in this study are counter-cases and will inevitably cause uncertainties, even hostility. There should be no problem, because “uncertainty in history is a form of protection” against dogmatism, at least.⁶

A radical review of Armenian history in its Near Eastern context is a project for generations of academics. This study is only a first attempt to open and survey a mostly unstudied field with novel methods and identify the problematic aspects and develop the arguments. At the end of each volume, there is an epilogue where the arguments are summarized.

II. Introduction to Volume One

Chapter One of this volume traces “Factors in the Pre-Islamic Armenian Condition—Fourth–Seventh Centuries,” as the title states. These factors also shaped the patterns of Armenian–Islamic interactions, hence the relevance of this section to the general study. From the beginning, bipolarity and pluralism distinguished all things Armenian and both the culture and politics evolved between and as part of the Roman/Byzantine west and Persian/Islamic east, assimilating many elements from both. The process continued to the end of the Middle Ages, and the beginning of the Ottoman Period. While most of the clergy and some of the nobility were consistently pro-western, the eastern camp was always broader and included large popular factions as well. The political–religious institutions were more rigid and pro-western, and the formation of dissident ideologies and careers was expected and happened. Regional politics contributed to the militarization of some trends and/or the suppression of others, but

throughout, dissidence was part of the basic texture of Armenian history. This is a major argument in this book and the theme of Armenian Dissidence is taken up throughout the study.

In general, each case and/or episode is studied in a holistic perspective. This means taking all the elements as parts of a whole. For example, as of the fourth century the “heretical” Christianity of the sects was as much part of early Armenian Christianity as that of the Church. Consequently, almost all of what has been written about the subject can only be partial. Armenian Christianity was not monolithic; it did not and could not really signal a sudden transition from one religious culture into another. Since there can be no purely religious ideology and culture, the substratum of both is simultaneously social, political, and economic.

Similar to heterodoxy, I also take syncretism as a paradigm to explain many obscure episodes, cultures, and folklores that persisted to the present. In general, the cultures of the entire region were unavoidably syncretistic, while ideological purism typified the policies and ideologies of the dominant religious and political institutions. Dichotomies between Armenian orthodoxy and heresy were drawn and conceptualized during the fifth century or the Golden Age of Armenian intellectual culture. They were maintained and persisted with force for many centuries. It is rarely noticed that the fifth century (or the Golden Age) legacies of faith, language, and ancestral values—the fundamentals in the conceptualization of the Armenians as a distinct people—gradually turned into fixities that trapped the free flow of cultural traffic, while causing sedimentations and congestion.

The “orthodoxy” of the Armenian institutions took shape in the midst of Byzantine–Persian conflict already during the fourth century and adopted the dogmatism and the imperialist spirit of both. By the eighth century the first histories (as of the fifth century) shaped the national narrative(s), and simultaneously defined all that contradicted or questioned them. In other words, they played a double function. It was in the name of orthodoxy that the artistic and intellectual legacies of paganism of all sorts, Zoroastrianism and Hellenism, as well as the indigenous syncretism of the Near East were branded by the fox-sign, as it were, and the peculiarities of early Armenian Christianity dissolved in the anti-heretical debates. During the mid-fifth century, Eznik Kołbac’i (theologian, philosopher, translator, Bishop of Bagrewand, died just after the middle of the fifth century) provided the philosophical grounding for the legacies of faith, language, and

ancestral values of the Age. He introduced a battery of polemical techniques, and more importantly, he contributed to the militarization of the Church.

Before the middle of the seventh century and after the arrival of the Arabs in eastern Asia Minor doctrinal affinities and persecution eased interactions between them and the sects, and the alliance with the Muslims militarized and politicized the dissident factions on the regional level.

As I try to show in this chapter and the study in general, Armenian dissidence was not just a class struggle within the Armenian peculiar feudal system, in which the Church too was another powerful participant. It was a more pervasive historical development and current. Individuals and trends of all social strata, even some clergy, like Eustathius (the Armenian bishop of Sivās during the third quarter of the fourth century), and during the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, Yakobos (the Armenian bishop of the province of Hark' northwest of Lake Van) and his contemporary *Vardapet* (monk-priest) Grigor Narekac'i (d.c.1003 of the Monastery of Narek on Lake Van), etc., were suspected and accused of heresy. As I will demonstrate, they were in fact genuinely spiritual and revolutionary-reformist figures, and as such they were feared and persecuted. Medieval histories provided little information about these figures and their followers. While the first two are referred to in anti-heretical contexts, the latter was known only by his own autobiography and a popular cycle of legends, a Narekiana of sorts, about a certain saintly figure called Narek, who was not even a *vardapet*. In sum, as of the fourth century, what I call Armenian Dissidence was a powerful, grass-root, reformist and cosmopolitan movement, which, as mentioned, was militarized soon after the arrival of the Arabs and drew its path in regional politics. Chapter Two of this volume, "Early Arab Campaigns and the Regulation of Relations According to the Medinan Legacy" deals with a relatively better-researched subject. However, the perspectives in which this period was narrated—but not analyzed—still remain very narrow. Also, instead of taking the year 884 (the coronation of the first Bagratuni king), I take the massive arrival of the Seljuks after mid-eleventh century as its end. While some medieval authors reconstructed the Arab Period in epic terms, more modern and contemporary authors offered a tedious story of invaders and invaded, oppressors and oppressed, Muslim fanatics and Christian martyrs, etc.

However looked upon, the Arab Period marked a massive exposure of the Armenians to a new and different, and primarily urban religious–political culture. Islam permanently changed the Near Eastern world and farther, both culturally and politically. Interactions happened, and still do, on all levels of society. It often escapes historians that as of the seventh century, Armenia became part of the Islamic world, also remaining part of the southern Caucasus. The situation has not changed much: three of the four neighbors of the Republic of Armenia today are countries with predominantly Muslim populations, Turkey, Iran, and Azerbaijan. But still, Islamic–Armenian interactions of almost fourteen centuries have received minimal attention from scholars in all the disciplines. This is where my research begins.

Islam caused an instant politicization of social conditions in Armenia. While in the case of the feudal nobility, the Armenian dynastic territories were created by Arab encouragement and support, large heterodox factions were politicized and militarized through their sympathies for and alliances with the Muslims. Either way, interaction with both political and cultural Islam expanded the peripheries of the Armenian experience, and this is no trivial matter. During the Arab period and practically due to Arab support, irrespective of the motives and the interests of the latter, the Armenian *naxarars* or nobility, such as the Bagratunis, Arcrunis, Siwnis rose to dynastic power. Byzantium always resented these so-called “kingdoms.” Byzantine emperors (many of whom were of Armenian descent) never acknowledged Armenian sovereignty and before the middle of the eleventh century these “kingdoms” were annexed to the Empire.

One of the peculiarities of medieval Armenian political culture was the total absence of basic frameworks of statehood and administration. The *naxarar* system remained archaic to a large extent, but the flexibility and pragmatism of the nobility and heterodox factions made up for lags in their evolution and contributed to the persistence of all. Often ideology was secondary to interest. I have analyzed the Arab Period in these perspectives.

Another and completely unstudied subject discussed in Chapter Two is the development of the patterns in which Islamic–Armenian relations were regulated as per early Islamic political culture. I argue that the literary tradition of Islamic oaths to Armenians is an absolutely vital issue that has never been studied. All but one of the circulating documents is verifiable, but the question of authenticity has nothing to do with the significance of the tradition. In medieval Armenian

histories the origin or the model, so to speak, of all Islamic–Armenian treatises was seen in the Medinan period of Islam (622–632) and a so-called “Prophet’s Oath to Armenians” (allegedly given to an Armenian delegation to Medinah). A long chain of agreements—also called “oaths,” “treatises,” “peace agreements,” etc. —continued through the Umayyad, Ayyūbid, and Safavid periods. The tradition also echoed in the Ottoman *Tanzimat* or Reforms of the nineteenth century. As each text in circulation claimed to be based on the previous ones, it became a link in a continuum. There came about a tradition, which acquired a historicity as an important aspect of Islamic–Armenian relations.

More importantly, in most of the contacts and resulting agreements, the negotiator was the Armenian Church representing the people. This leads us to another understudied subject: the status of the Armenian Church in Islamic states and societies. It must be common knowledge that under Muslim rule—even during the most somber moments of the later Ottoman period—the Armenian Church and clergy were protected by law and gained political significance and economic prosperity. Monasteries and monastic schools were established in the tenth century and had exclusive control over the intellectual culture. The dark side of Armenian monasticism was its radicalism and institutional corruption. The rebellions in reaction were frequent and widespread. The causes and effects were simultaneously ideological, social, and economic. Troubled times, especially during the tenth and eleventh centuries on the entire surface of Armenia east and west, only partially surfaced in histories. To connect the dots, Arab sources are of primary importance, other types of texts, such as anti-heretical texts even poetry must be referred to as well.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the so-called Paulician and T’ondrakian histories were very much part of the Arab Period. They produced perhaps the most intriguing paradigms to understand not only Armenian–Islamic interactions but also Armenian social–cultural history and folklore at that time. No literature has survived and most of the information on these trends came from their enemies, but from what has been written in anti-heretical texts it is possible to draw the general outlines of their doctrinal position. I suggest that the philosophical *arche* (or first principle) and legacy of Armenian dissidence was what I call the “no-boundary” principle. It marked a transition from early Christianity to a more developed phase in social–religious culture. Rejection of hierarchy, egalitarian demands, communalism, rationalism of some trends and mysticism of others, equality of

women, etc., were all expressions of a surprisingly developed culture. The alliance of the heterodox factions with the Muslim side was a predictable and inevitable consequence of the situation in the Byzantine and Islamic worlds, and not just in Armenia, which was anyway divided between the two.

There was another factor in the evolution of Armenian dissidence, and that was Islamic dissidence. In Islam dissident trends began appearing as of the first century of its advent. As discussed in my other articles and books, in my opinion the so-called sects in various parts of the medieval Near East shared strikingly similar doctrines, circumstances, and careers. In fact, I could have a much better understanding of the Armenian sects after studying the Irano-Islamic and other syncretistic trends in the entire Near East. Armenian and Near Eastern scholars will have to realize that just as the Armenian ones, Islamic sects too are subjects in medieval Near Eastern urbanism. Similar to Ismā'ilism, the politicization and militarization of Armenian dissident factions as of the eighth century marked an advanced stage in the evolution of Near Eastern society. Both were closely connected to regional syncretism, reformist tendencies, social and economic change, power struggles, and many more factors, as I try to show in this study. Another major theme is that of the urban youth coalitions of Armenian *manuks* and the Islamic *futuwwa*. As cities began developing in the 'Abbāsid world, and already during the ninth century, there began appearing somehow anarchistic, extra-ethnic, extra-religious, and militant coalitions of jobless young men. But however they were known, *manuks*, *fityān*, *aḥdāth*, *'ayyarūn*, etc., they were aspects of Near Eastern urban and social development (as I try to demonstrate in Volume Three).

Also closely connected to the phenomenon of dissidence, the chapter provides yet another entirely new paradigm: the Frontiers or the Borderlands between the Byzantine and Islamic (Arab, Seljuk, and later Mongol) empires. As discussed in Volume Two as well, only recently scholars have begun studying this aspect of medieval Islamic history, but Armenian scholarship is still alien to this development. Even the dispute around the Byzantine epic of *Digenis Akritis* finds its proper context in the Frontiers. This was a vast area from the Black Sea to north al-Shām and Cilicia, where several cultures, trends, and traditions were diffused. The 'Abbāsid project to create a unique and exclusive region for Holy War or *Jihād* and a "true Muslim life" failed but the Frontiers created for these ideals, or the *akritic* world became an entity of its own. The region was a haven for syncretistic,

dissident, mostly militant and marginal communities. In this context, *Digenis Akritis* must be re-studied as “history” too, because it is the only surviving document that contains the identifiable echoes of a lost phase and lost world in Armenian and regional histories.

I argue that an important part of Medieval Islamic–Armenian history falls, or rather must fall, under the heading of *akritics* or Borderlands history, with its own peculiar type of historicity. These border regions were a most appropriate milieu for indigenous Near Eastern syncretism, which under the strictly orthodox establishments of both Byzantium and the Caliphate as well as all the churches, was unwelcome. Muslims and Christians of all ethnic backgrounds—like the heroes of *Digenis Akritis*—had more in common with one another than with the peoples on the opposite sides of the Frontiers. In over three centuries of existence, the Frontiers became a marker as well as assimilator of differences. The condition allowed commercial contacts and became a breeding ground for a peculiar landholding warrior aristocracy. Initially built as border fortifications, the small fortress-towns on the Frontiers and the Euphrates in particular and some of the Tigris, became cities after the tenth–eleventh centuries and still maintained their cosmopolitan nature. Medieval cosmopolitanism is discussed in Volume Three.

The paradigm of Borderlands, suggested in this study is absolutely essential to review and deconstruct many seemingly simple yet otherwise new and complex patterns of interaction between peoples of the region. Armenian–Islamic interactions are another aspect of this project. This chapter also gives some space for the discussion of the revolutionary-reformist or “dissident” nature of the literature of Grigor Narekac’i. I shall refer to him in Chapter Two of Volume Two. He embodied his age, was accused of T’ondrakism, but was and still is kept at a safe distance from analysis in the mediocre portrait of the medieval “mystic” and “saint.”

Notes

1. Gordon Graham, *The Shape of the Past—A Philosophical Approach to History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 124.
2. Alun Munslow, *Deconstructing History* (London: Routledge, 1997), 60.
3. Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 21.
4. Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, 11.
5. *Ibid.*, 31.
6. *Ibid.*, 171.

Factors in the Pre-Islamic Armenian Condition— Fourth–Seventh Centuries

The ways in which Armenian institutions, classes, factions, trends, and individuals interacted with cultural and political Islam were to a large extent shaped by factors already active in the previous centuries.

While Byzantium smoothly replaced the Roman Empire in the West, the Arabs replaced the Persians in the East, at least as far Armenians were concerned. Even though it came into the stage as a distinct religious–political system, Islam in turn was a result and very much a part of local circumstances. Syrian and other Christians in the region persisted with varying degrees of influence. For Armenia and Armenians life between two superpowers was not interrupted. In all respects, they constituted a subsystem in a vast and ancient world of great civilizations. Commonly used terms like “influences,” “relations,” even “interactions” seem to be understatement in view of the symbiotic manner in which cultures and peoples evolved in the region. The factors that contributed to the shaping of the Armenian–Islamic experience were:

1. East–West rivalries in which were engaged Armenian kings, catholicoi, *naxarars* (heads of houses of nobility), and the common people
2. The cultural policies and the legacy of fundamental loyalties of the Armenian Classical or Golden Age in the Fifth century
3. Definitions of Armenian orthodoxy and the synthesis of the Armenian theologian Eznik (mid-fifth century)
4. Early Armenian social–religious dissent

I. East–West Rivalries: Kings, Catholicoi, Naxarars, Common People

From the beginning Armenian political history and culture were marked by pluralism. As of the first century AD to the middle of the

seventh and increasingly, the political, social, and cultural evolution of Armenians was part of a world, which simultaneously divided and brought together the East and the West. The East was Persian then Islamic, and the West was Roman, then Byzantine. Centuries later, after the arrival of the Crusaders at the end of the eleventh century, in addition to being Chalcedonian-Byzantine, the West was also European and Catholic. The Armenian condition reflected the constant and simultaneous existence of hostile power bases and policies. Predictably, the western choice was sometimes synonymous with anti-Easternism and vice versa. The Church and some of the nobles were consistently pro-Western, while other nobles, clergy, popular factions, and dissident-heterodox trends frequently sided with the East.

The Parthian-born Armenian Arsacid dynasty (*Aršakunis*, AD 53–428) were vassals to the two warring empires, Roman and Sassanid (AD 226–651), often to both simultaneously. In the meantime, as of the first century, Christianity in its early trends and forms was spreading in Armenia from the south and west. The new faith was unwelcome for the Persians, even though the Syriac-adoptinist channels and the versions through which it spread, were in turn rejected and persecuted by the Byzantine Church too. (According to these early Syriac trends, Jesus was born of Joseph and Mary in the normal way, in other words, He was not divine, He became divine by adoption by God at His baptism. Obviously, the idea contradicted the doctrine of Trinity, at least).

Religions in the Near East were always—and still are—politicized and inevitably caused and/or became political problems, hence the political dimensions of Armenian Christianity too.¹ The adoption of Christianity by Arsacid King Trdat or Tiridates III (last term: 298–330) and his imposition of the new religion on the people of his kingdom, marked a shift toward Rome,² even though he was said to be proud of his Parthian ancestry. Naturally, the Persians could not approve his move. At the time Armenian culture was predominantly Parthian and the circumstances of the conversion of the king at the hand of another Parthian, later to be known as St. Grigor I Lusaworič (Gregory the Illuminator, incumbency 302–325) was in fact depicted in Iranian epic terms.³ The power struggle and politics of the Church, monarchy, and nobility caused deep crises on all levels. Later on in the century at least two Arsacid kings as well as some of the nobility entered into conflicts with the Church, for a variety of reasons. Aršak II (345–368) and his son Pap (368–373) “seem to have been Arianising heretics,” observes Russell, “but not outright infidels.”⁴ (The Arianists

had adoptionistic views and were already rejected by the Byzantine and the Armenian Churches).

The conversion of the state did not mean the total conversion of all the Armenians to Christianity. The process took many centuries and encountered serious dissent. The new faith was imposed by force by King Tiridates III and Catholicos Grigor I. They were negligent and even hostile toward not only the native pagan culture, arts, and architecture, but the faith of already converted Armenians too. They did not seem to tolerate early communalistic Christianity in general. Furthermore, at the time on the popular level at least, Christian religious culture must have been syncretistic and paganism was very much active. In other words, syncretism, adoptionism, and communalism typified the early Armenian Christian trends.

Byzantine and Armenian Churches slowly began to define orthodoxy but negatively, or through what they considered unacceptable and challenging to the established order, be that moral, social, or religious. Any expression of dissent or form of deviance was classified as heresy. As Henderson rightly indicates, the so-called heresies were obviously taken very seriously, because they posed a threat from within the given system. From the beginning, dissident ideas and communities were associated with “dark forces from beyond the pale,” or outside and against standards of right and wrong. Early theology, says Henderson, was “hidden heresiography.” In fact, it began in heresiography or formulating the errors of others as opposed to “right” beliefs. The initial formulation of doctrines began in these contexts.⁵ Concerning Armenian religious culture and history in general, the most distinctive yet misrepresented aspect was its development along two paths: the institutional/orthodox and the popular/dissident or heretical. The latter level was largely obscured because almost without exception medieval chroniclers and historians were men of the church. Only recently some Armenologists in the west have concerned themselves with the peculiarities of Armenian Christianity. The heretical syndrome still obscures many historic aspects of Armenian Christianity. Soviet and eastern Armenian historians classified some dissident-related episodes of the tenth and eleventh centuries under what they described as “peasant uprisings against the feudal nobility and the church.” The approach did shed light on certain aspects of social history but fell short from defining the core problems of Armenian history.

The Arsacids may have been only political Christians. They were Persian, i.e., eastern in their culture and politics, and the Hellenophiles

openly rebuked them. Even though founded by a Parthian convert to Christianity, Catholicos Grigor *Pahlaw* or *Part'ew Lusaworič'*, the Armenian Church was western in its politics and remained so, despite the Chalcedonian break after the mid-fifth century. The Sassanids on their part supported eastern Christians and Nestorians in particular. They established a bishopric for the Syrian Christians in their capital. Furthermore, while during pre-Christian times the pagan temple had little or no control over the state, the situation radically changed after the adoption of the new faith by the state. Led by Grigor and his descendants, the Church inherited the wealth, estates, and privileges of the temples and rose as a powerful feudal institution next to the monarchy and the *naxarars*. It was largely an autonomous institution with its own diplomacy and economy. Over a century before the adoption of the new religion by the state in the 310s, many Armenians had already converted to Christianity throughout historic Armenia, with the Plane of Ayrarat at the center of the area affected. The prominent historian Leo observes that what Grigor I the Illuminator introduced was "imperial" Christianity as opposed to the "poor" Christianity or the faith of the common people. Through the Church of the Illuminator the official faith was heavily politicized and deepened class distinctions in Armenian society, as Leo believes.⁶

Following the Iranian norm, similar to that of the monarch, the office of the catholicos too became hereditary. Grigor I and his clan (*tohm*) held the catholicosal chair for the next thousand years, including the Cilician times. Pagan structures and culture were destroyed and Aštišat, where the catholicos resided, became the most luxurious city in the province of Taron (which was also the estate of the catholicos). Since there were no educated and trained candidates in Armenia at the time of Christianization, clergy were brought in from abroad. They were placed at the heads of almost four hundred parishes and provided with estates, and a new class of clergy came about.⁷

Under the heavy shadow of the Church of Caesarea, the Armenian Church joined forces with the Hellenophile nobles, and the Mamikoneans in particular. The latter held the hereditary office of *sparapet* or army commander. Almost immediately a front was formed against the powerful Iranophile camp.⁸ Already at the middle of the fourth century, the interests of central monarchy clashed with those of the nobility and the Church. Eventually, tension between these forces as well as dissident factions dominated Armenian political culture for the next millennium and further. The reflections of the

Byzantine–Iranian and later on the Byzantine–Islamic conflict were explicit not only in Armenian religious culture but the institution of the Catholicosate too.

The first council of the Armenian Church was held in 354 and a series of canons were issued always under the jurisdiction of Caesarea, and to the displeasure of the Persians and their sympathizers and allies. The construction of the open city of Aršakawan by King Aršak II (350–c.364/7) was a counter-action addressed to the fortified hellenophile camp. It was probably the first initiative to develop an independent and “urban” power base, as opposed to the agrarian-based power of the naxarars. The project also was designed to create a power center and to host all the persecuted, displeased, and dissident factions. The destruction of the city by the pro-catholicosal Hellenophile naxarars was followed by the violent deaths of the army commander or Sparapet Vasak Mamikonean, then King Aršak himself, the “cursed” Aršakuni (for his Parthian sympathies). Aršak’s son and successor King Pap (367–c.374) was raised in Rome but in turn wanted to consolidate his position as the central and sovereign authority. He ended the tradition of ordaining the Armenian catholicos in Caesarea and freed the Armenian Church from its influence. In these troubled circumstances, Catholicos Nersēs I Partew the Great (353–373), son of Lusaworič’ was murdered, King Pap was accused of the murder and in turn killed. After Pap’s death the Aršakunis began losing significance until their demise in 428. In 387, Byzantine Emperor Theodosius I (378–395) and Sassanid King Šahpūr III (383–388) partitioned Armenia between them. The latter took control of the greater part in the east. To that date Armenians had participated in and adopted the canons of the Universal Councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381).

The Aršakunis continued to reign but not rule in the Persian sector of Armenia until 428, while Byzantium considered Armenian territories under its control just a province of the Empire. The weakening of central authority and Sassanid assaults on Armenian centers in Zarišat, Naxiĵewan, Zarehawan, Van, Vaġaršapat, Erwandašat, etc., led to a peculiar form of early feudalism and a predominantly rural society and culture. During the next centuries Armenians lived on a decentralized and divided land and the Church remained the only organized institution that engendered both parts of the land. It headed a very strong Hellenophile camp dominated by the Mamikoneans, who also controlled the army. Catholicos Sahak I Part’ew (386–439)—the son of Nersēs the Great and a grandson of Lusaworič’—had no male

inheritor (for his “pontifical dynasty”—*kahanayapetakan dinastia*—as Leo puts it).⁹ His daughter, married to sparapet Vardan Mamikonean, became the sole inheritor of the catholicosal estate. The immense wealth of the Catholicosate passed to the Mamikoneans and tilted the balance of power. Much later, this house led several uprisings against the Arabs, and eventually migrated to the Byzantine side at the end of the eighth century.

As mentioned, pro-Westerners like the Mamikoneans, for example, remained pro-Western after the start of the Arab domination and pro-Easterners like the Bagratunis, Siwnis and Arcrunis, maintained good relations with the Arabs, without however severing links with Byzantium. They too would eventually become dynastic houses with the support and sometimes encouragement of Arab or Muslim rulers. The reformist social–religious dissidents, who as of the fourth century opposed the Christianity of the Church, adhered to their early versions of Christianity and their mixed beliefs. When Arabs arrived in the region these dissidents developed sympathies toward Islam too; many allied with the Muslims, and conversions were widespread. As argued, political choices and careers on all social strata had their roots in the pre-Islamic Armenian conditions.

The East–West rivalries and Armenian “Eastomania” and “Westomania”¹⁰ were dominant factors to the end of the Middle Ages. Just as there were genuine Iranophiles, as of the seventh century there were also Arabophiles among all classes and factions. Whatever the choices, Armenian social and political evolution was never in favor of a strong central monarchy. There was also a margin for independent choices and Armenia became a favorable milieu for the growth of alternative and often extra-establishment careers in Armenian–Islamic history. The Church consistently maintained its alliance with the Christian side, although some figures and catholicoi established good relations with the Caliphate for the benefit of the Church and their position at least. Leo mentions few “true statesmen,” such as King Pap, T’eodoros Rštuni, Mleh, and some Cilician kings, who were unaffected by Armenian Westomania. He is dismayed by the “scarcity of those who really understand Armenian history.”¹¹

II. The Cultural Policies and the Legacy of Fundamental Loyalties of the Classical Age

By the middle of the fifth century, next to Christianity, the inception of the national script and the beginning of native literature caused

a watershed in the Armenian condition. Together with three other episodes that happened during the first half of the fifth century, a historical cycle was completed and a new era inaugurated. The first development was the demise of the Aršakunis in 428 and the loss of already nominal sovereignty too for almost half a millennium. The second episode was the spectacular defeat of the Armenians before the Persian armies in 451 at the Battle of Awarayr (on the River Tımut southeast of Maku and northeast of Lake Van). In the same year the Universal Council of Chalcedon defined Byzantine Christology, which the Armenians eventually would reject.

The necessity of a national script was closely linked to the period that followed the partition of 387. Many Armenians on the Persian side returned to paganism and Zoroastrian sun worship. The Syrian church and Nestorians regained vitality and influence on Persian territories, including most of Armenia. A national script would not only facilitate the teaching of Christianity, but more importantly, it would—as it did—“Armenize” the new faith. The initiative seems to have come from Mesrop Vardapet, a priest who had previously served as an official in the Armenian royal court. Catholicos Sahak supported the idea and presented the project to King Vramšabuh (388–414). The project to develop an Armenian alphabet was launched with the support of the latter.

Also called Maštoc’ (by his biographer Koriwn, only), Mesrop was probably born around 362 and died on February 17, 440. He was in his early forties when he gave his people a national script. It became a tool for the development of intellectual culture in the native language. The Alphabet had twenty-eight consonants, eight vowels, later on “o” and “f” were added in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The *aybubēn* (“abc”) now has thirty-eight letters and is still seen by many, as a “divine gift” to the Armenian people transmitted through Mesrop, made a saint of the Armenian Church.

Whatever the description and emotional underpinnings of the inception of the alphabet, as of this episode, faith, language, and identity were interlocked and politicized. The Church and the creed were identified with the nation. From the perspective of some scholars, even non-Armenians such as J. Laurent, this peculiarity contributed to the persistence of both the Church and the nation. The latter wrote:

The absolute dedication and the exclusive love that otherwise and elsewhere have been reserved for the fatherland, Armenians have

given them to their religion. Before everything else, Armenia was the Armenian Church, its institutions, creed, and faithful. This was their religion and their nationality, so much so that their religious organization was kept indissolubly intact.¹²

J. P. Mahé in turn observes that despite its dual nature, Armenian Christology became an “Armenian creed” (*confession arménienne*), hostile to the Chalcedonians. It was as though whoever refused to adhere to this creed did not have the right to be called an Armenian. In other words, it became morally and legally specific to his nationality. This condition continued through the Middle Ages.¹³ At any rate, while both Byzantines and Persians exerted pressure to convert Armenians to Chalcedonianism or Mazdaism, the latter also encouraged the Armenians to adopt a Christian creed opposed by the Greeks,¹⁴ such as Nestorianism. By their geographic location, Armenians were in direct contact with both Dyophysites and Monophysites and always refused the two natures of Christ, as defined by the Chalcedonians. On the other hand they condemned the extreme monophysitism of Eutyches and the Julianism of Yovhan Mayragomec‘i. Often described as pluralistic or dualistic,¹⁵ Armenian Christology was also based on political concerns to maintain a “third” and independent status between the Chalcedonian and Monophysitic positions. It was designed to provide a margin for flexibility.

To assist and consolidate its position and missionary work, the Church set out to produce a Christian literature, both native and in translation. Mesrop and his disciples translated, wrote, and taught. Teaching the script in Byzantine or Western Armenia was delayed until 436, and began only after Mesrop was allowed to do so in Byzantium. The condition that Emperor Theodosius II (408–450) placed for this activity was the eradication of the adversaries of the Empire in the Persian camp, be they Syrian, Nestorian, or simply heretical Christians in the Eastern parts of Armenia as well.

The Bible was the first full text that was translated. It was soon followed by a great number of religious and theological texts from Syriac and Greek. The massive project of translations opened Armenian literary culture to classical as well as post-classical literature and intellectual trends. In spite of political instability, the fifth century and some of the next produced the Classical or Golden Age of Armenian literature. Often taken as an epic episode, the Battle of Awarayr in 451 against the Sassanid armies resulted the inevitable and massive

defeat of the small and unorganized army of Christian Armenia before imperial Zoroastrian Persia. Through the histories of Elišē and later narratives it became the most iconic episode in Armenian history, and still is subject of analysis and debate. Whatever the interpretations, the episode embodied the complexities of the age and the Armenian condition at that time. Persian suspicions against the Hellenophiles grew when they learned of contacts with Byzantium. When an Armenian delegation visited the Byzantine Emperor Theodosius II to protest against Persian pressures to convert Armenians to Zoroastrianism (at the incitement of some Syrian figures, as it was said), the emperor refused to extend his assistance. Instead, he informed Yazdgard II (438–457) of Armenian intentions to revolt. During 448–449, led by Armenian clergy, insurrections flared up in Persian Armenia and Zoroastrian fire temples were assaulted. The naxarars were summoned to the Persian court, where they made fake conversions and returned home. The episode ended with the brief battle on the Plane of Awarayr by the banks of the Tłmut River where the small Armenian force led by Vardan Mamikonean was wiped out.

The event produced the thirty-six saints of Vardananc' and permanently demonized the Iranophiles in the eyes of the Church and some of the public. More importantly, it fixed the dictum or the maxim of "death with piety rather than life with apostasy" (*mah astwacapaštut'eamb k'an keank' urac'ut'eamb*). The other maxim was "conscious/deliberate [choice of] death is immortality" (*mah imac'eal annmahut'iwn ē*).¹⁶

Awarayr fixed loyalty to the Christian faith—as propagated by the Church at least—at the core of Armenian identity, and added a new one, loyalty to ancestral values, or the Armenian nation, as it was conceived then. The episode completed a hundred and fifty-year process of conceptualizing the Armenians in Christian terms. In sum, the legacy of this process was a fundamental formula of loyalties: loyalty to faith, language, and ancestral values. Soon, the literature, and the first histories adopted this system of values and used it as the basis of a national narrative. From the perspective of these loyalties all things Persian and non-Christian (as the Church defined them) became unacceptable.

The Sassanid state was based on a strongly national Zoroastrianism and like Islam, religion was a way of life; it defined politics too. The throne and the temple merged and a bureaucratic state was created. As a result, Zoroastrianism could not be marginalized or separated from

the state and the nation. It was the ideological “face” of the Sassanids, just as Islam was the ideological face of the Caliphate. In the case of Armenians, Zoroastrianism was part of their religious–political environment and culture and predictably Christianity complicated matters. Even when Persians were tolerant, they wanted Armenians to follow a trend that contradicted Byzantine positions. As early as in 410, Yazdgard I (399–421) summoned the first council to organize the Church of Persia. Even after the fall of the Sassanids in 651, Syrian Christians still maintained close links with the East.

III. Definitions of Armenian Orthodoxy and the Synthesis of Eznik (mid-Fifth Century)

A. The Book of Dissidents or Refutation of Sects (Ełc Ałandoc’)

Already during the last decades of the fourth century and to the middle of the next, in addition to Sassanid and Byzantine pressures, the Church faced the threat of large heterodox or “heretical” factions referred to as *alandk’* (sects) and/or *yerjwacolk’* (heretics). These included the *Mclnēans* (or the Mesopotamian Monastics, Messalians), the Borborits, and other Gnostic and adoptionist trends. They challenged the Christianity of the Church, the canons of the Universal Councils, and more importantly, the social norms, and religious and political institutions.

Eznik¹⁷ lived during the first half of the fifth century and his *magnum opus*, the *Book of Dissidents* (*Girk’ Ēnddimuteanc’*) or commonly and wrongly titled as the *Refutation of Sects* (*Ełc Ałandoc’*) is as unique in Armenian literature as its period. If Grigor Lusaworič’ made Christianity a state religion (*betakanac’um*), Nersēs the Great nationalized it (*azgaynac’um*), Sahak and Mesrop Armenized it (*hayac’um*), Eznik rationalized it (*banaganac’um*). This first comprehensive response to the issues of the period was written probably during late 440s, and for a long time remained relatively little known.

The literature of Eznik has special relevance and deserves some attention in this study because it was a synthesis of a hundred and fifty years of Armenian cultural–political development. Similar to the initiative to invent a national script, this synthesis was motivated by the circumstances of the first half of the fifth century. It formulated the essential questions, suggested answers, and projected solutions for the future. Judging from the content and structure of the book, Eznik’s aim was to outline “rational” criteria—as he often emphasized—to distinguish right beliefs and actions from wrong ones. Furthermore,

in Armenian literature he was the first to deal critically with powerful rival ideologies and cultures in the region. The sects were not his primary objective, the title notwithstanding; the latter was added in the eighteenth century during the first publication of the manuscript.

Eznik personally witnessed a series of extremely significant events: the inception of the Alphabet, the translations, the demise of the Aršakunis, the deposing and imprisonment of Catholicos Sahak, the rise of pro-Persian catholicos Surmak from Bžnunik', then Syrian Bexišo and Samvēl, Yazdgard II's violent measures to eradicate Hellenophilia, dissident unrest, the Council of Šahapiwan (447/8), the deaths of Sahak and then Mesrop, the forceful return to Mazdaism and fire worship, the Council of Aštišat in 449 (which he attended and where he is said to have written the famous letter of the Armenian refusal of conversion addressed to the Sassanid court). He also saw the popular insurrections against the pagan temples and subsequent events in Ctesiphon, which led to Awarayr.¹⁸ Justifying militarism in defense of the faith against the Persians and others, he defined life as war and openly supported rebellion and open conflict.

The *Book of Dissidents* (*Girk' Ėndimut'eanc'*) or *Refutation of the Sects* (*Elc Ałandoc'*)¹⁹ seems to have been written very shortly after the death of Mesrop in 440. The objective, as Eznik wrote, was "teaching that which is true" (*zčšmaritn usuc'anel*). From a narrowly theological point of view, the book was considered a polemical-apologetic (*hakačarut'iwn-jaťagowut'iwn*) work aimed at consolidating Armenian Apostolic Christianity against other faiths and ideologies in the region. Eznik was obviously familiar with Syrian and Greek polemical literature of earlier periods, but as mentioned, the book was not addressed strictly to the sects.²⁰ The added title is clearly based on a limited appreciation of the contents of the book; most probably Eznik had another title. The Zoroastrians were not sectarians, nor were the Greek philosophical schools and the Armenian nature worshippers. Eznik did not even mention the Borborits and the Mcnēans, who presented a real threat and were persecuted and physically harmed by Mesrop himself, as Koriwn related. Of the various groups examined in his work, only Marcionism, to which Eznik dedicated a section, was considered a "sect" or a "heresy."

The book was addressed to all ideologies, faiths, and cultures that stood in opposition to Christian doctrines and ethics, as envisaged by the Armenian Church. Eznik was drawing the principles of right

and wrong ideas, beliefs and actions. He was in fact defining Armenian orthodoxy as opposed to unacceptable positions. In all cases, according to Eznik, in addition to revealed truth, the ultimate measure of truth was reason. The Bible could not contradict reason, because God was rational and good, as he argued. Consequently, the causes for all adverse and wrong ideas/actions/phenomena were to be found in human choices and actions. This simple principle was adopted by Armenian intellectual culture and eventually Eznik became the founder of Armenian heresiography and religious ethics. He was also the founder of Armenian philosophical literature.

As mentioned, the arguments and ideas in the book were not totally new or original and Eznik made no such claims. One can of course speak of the sources that Eznik utilized in his book, not so much to show the non-originality of the work, but the contrary: that we are dealing with an educated author, who has done his homework. As was the custom in those times, he did not bother to mention his sources, and we know that at the time and later on in the Middle Ages, even translations and paraphrases passed for original works. Obviously, Eznik was familiar with and made use of *On Autonomy* of Olympiodorus, the *Apology* of Aristides of Athens, *Against the Heresies* of Epiphanos, works by Basil of Alexandria, Origen, Statius, Theodorus of Tarsus, and others.

B. The Fundamentals of Eznik's Synthesis

Initial attempts to conceptualize Armenian religious culture were in fact made by Mesrop and Sahak. Conceptualizing Armenian intellectual as well as political culture in a Christian framework and as distinct from others in the region was a priority for Eznik too. This was his synthesis and here lay the rarely analyzed political dimension of his work. Life is a war, he said, and only he who has the most potent weapon could win. One of the weapons was the knowledge of both the self and the others. One way of defining the Armenian position was showing the differences.

Eznik therefore saw it necessary to define the position of the Armenian Church toward Greek sciences and philosophy, pagan cultures, popular religious cultures, Zrwanism, polytheism, nature worship, pantheism, atheism, Stoicism, Epicureanism, Gnostic trends, Marcionism, Epicurean atomism, materialism, and all forms of dualism. Already familiar with some Greek texts, Eznik also used the Socratic-Platonic method of dialectic. The following points summarize the

fundamentals of Eznik's synthesis, which were gradually adopted in the literature to the end of the Middle Ages:

1. Rationality as an essential feature of reality, both physical and supernatural
2. Basic monotheism—divine nature and action
3. Centrality of free will and autonomy of human nature and society
4. A philosophy of evil as the consequence of free human action
5. A significant margin for secular literature through translations or *artak'in greank'*
6. Theoretical foundations for dichotomies between heresy and orthodoxy.

Eznik's refutations of extreme rationalism, skepticism, Gnosticism, and dualism of all types negatively highlighted the orthodoxy of the Armenian Church. His positive statements came in the context of arguments, in other words, by presenting the errors in the position of others, Eznik was in fact defining the peripheries of the orthodoxy of the Armenian Church. At the beginning of the book he advised his audience to approach all things with a clear, unobstructed vision and a lucid mind. Just like one who must clean his eyes of impurities to look at the sun, he wrote, he who wants to talk of the incorporeal and eternal power (God), had to clear his mind and free his soul of all other concerns.²¹ In the style of his exact contemporary in North Africa, the Bishop of Hippo St. Augustine (354–430), Eznik declared that the supernatural world and God were inaccessible to human reason and that such matters must be maintained by a conscious or deliberate faith (*gitakc'akan hawatk'*). The inaccessibility of the divine essence, however, did not cancel rationalism or justify skepticism. He also dismissed the other extreme, Gnosticism, which claimed superior knowledge or *gnosis*, as ungrounded. The essential for him and all Armenian medieval authors after him, was that Biblical truths were rational and could not lead to absurdities and logical contradictions. This was the starting point of his polemical literature and it was adopted by later figures such as Yovhan Ōjnek'i, Grigor Narekac'i, Nersēs Šnorhali, Asoġik, Grigor Tat'ewac'i, and Matt'ēos Ĵulayec'i. This is the significance of Eznik's synthesis for this study.

IV. Early Armenian Social–Religious Dissent

The conversion of Armenians to Christianity was a long process. After the first three ecumenical councils (Nicaea, 325; Constantinople, 381; Ephesus, 431) and subsequent councils of the churches the heresies were identified and “orthodoxy” began to take shape. Otherwise,

much depended on the manners in which Christian dogma met the political challenges in Armenia, the long traditions of pagan cultures, and social problems. But beyond the obvious divergences between “poor” and “imperial” Christianity, the so-called heresies became the “intellectual exponents”²² of Armenian social and political dissidence as of the fourth century.

In this respect, the massive phenomenon of medieval Armenian dissidence—rather revolutionary thought and action—was a singularity and as such a historical trend. It took shape by the middle of the fourth century and evolved to the end of the middle ages and beyond. Religious heresy was just an aspect of this complex process and level. The subject, however, was greatly marginalized and its historicity was dissolved in heresiographies, at best.

The earliest known dissidents in early Armenian Christianity were the so-called Eustathian heretics in Sivās/Sebastia in Cappadocia during the second half of the fourth century. During the fifth century two groups were identified: the Mcnēans and the Borborits. During the late sixth century the Paulicians spread throughout Asia Minor, after the arrival of the Arabs and through their alliance with them, they were militarized and persisted through the twelfth century and later. The beginning of the T’ondrakians is usually put in the first quarter of the ninth century; the latter too were, in turn, militarized. Names and identifications varied, no literature survived, but dissident thought and activity continued beyond the fifteenth century into the nineteenth century. Dissidence was an essential yet totally neglected aspect of Armenian social, cultural, and political history in the region. It also became a channel of interaction with Islam.

A. The Eustathian Heretics of Sivās—Canons of the Council of Gangra (c.374)

According to E. Tēr Minaseanc’, Christianity penetrated Armenia from Mesopotamia through Edessa and Nisibis in the south. From Cappadocia in the west it spread through Caesarea, Sivās, and Melitene.²³ The Syrian adoptionist trends came in through the Mesopotamian channels. During the last decades of the third century, Lesser Armenia (*P’ok’r Hayk’*, or Lesser Armenia) west of the Western Euphrates) was a separate province from Cappadocia in its southeast. The city of Sivās was the center in the northern part as was Melitene in the southern one.²⁴ The church of Lesser Armenia followed the

Church of Caesarea,²⁵ where Grigor the Illuminator was ordained too.²⁶ But previously, and according to the *History* of Movsēs Xorenac'i, during the first years of the third century, the doctrines of Valentine were preached in Armenia by the Gnostic Bardayzan or Bardesanes (b.154),²⁷ probably a part-Armenian native of Edessa.²⁸

Early versions of the Scriptures were first introduced into Armenia through Syrian channels. The *Gospel According to the Four* (*Ēst Ć'oric' Awetaran*, or *Diatesaron*), with a commentary by St. Ephrem (or Ephraim), was one of these versions. Many centuries after an official version was issued in the first quarter of the fifth century, in isolated parts of Upper Mesopotamia some communities were still using translations of early Gnostic bibles. The historian T'ovma Arcruni (ninth–tenth centuries) spoke of a “semi-nomadic” community in the district of Xut' (west of Lake Van, at the source of contemporary Batman Su, a tributary of the Tigris, on the borders between historic Aġjnik' and Taron) in the region of Mayyafāriqin. He wrote:

Half of them [the Xut'] have lost their mother tongue through the remoteness of their residence. These people who dwelled in the mountains which separated Taron from Aġjnik', were adventurers and *xut'* [idiot, *akhwat* in Arabic,], they had a fantastic and unintelligible language. Their mountain was called Xut' after them. They [only] knew and constantly repeated the Psalms translated by ancient Armenian translators. They were peasants who came from Syria, Adrametek' and Sanasar and called themselves Sanasnai'.²⁹

Alongside the pro-Hellenic Armenian Church, and in opposition to the latter, Syrian Christianity maintained its influence; Edessa then Nisibis and their schools became important learning centers. After the middle of the fifth century, Persian-backed Nestorians carried their missionary work into Armenia. Bishop Jacob of Nisibis (*Yakob Mchneq'i*, d.c.338) and Ephrem the Syrian (*Ep'rem Asori*, born in Nisibis, c.306) were authorities and found followers in Armenia.³⁰ The House of Catholicos Grigor I practically co-existed with the rival house of the Syrian Aġbianus in Manazkert (Manzikert, north of Lake Van), the capital of the historic district of Apahunik'. By the end of the fifth century, Syrian influence dwindled and the Armenian Church—even though not monophysitic—headed the monophysitic churches against Byzantine-led Chalcedonians.

The Armenians inhabited a geographically vast region saturated by a variety of old and new religious traditions. The church had little

control over the peripheral regions. Even during more or less centralized political systems, the peripheries had a mixed population and syncretism marked the cultures of most Armenians. Adoptionist and Docetistic Christologies, iconoclasm, radical dualism of matter and spirit deeply affected the development of Armenian Christianity, in these locations at least. Heterodox trends mixed with dissident movements and as mentioned, a broad and vibrant level of Armenian dissidence was created as of the fourth century. Consecutive church councils anathematized the heresies of Artemon, Arius, Valentine, Epiphanes, Marcion, Mani, Bardesanes, Messalians/*Mctneans* and Borborits. After the sixth century, Paulicians, T'ondrakians, Arewordik' (sun worshippers), and Muslim Armenians were consistently considered the descendants and/or remnants of the early trends.³¹ Obviously, medieval authors looked at dissidence as an ancient and continuing and persistent trend.

After the spread of slave revolts in Roman territories in the Near East, many communities arrived in Armenia from Egypt and Palestine through Nisibis and Cappadocia. Known as the Mesopotamian Monastics, they first settled in Kortuk' and Rštunik', south of Lake Van. Other groups entered from the west into Lesser Armenia and settled in Covk', Ałjnik', and around the western Tigris.³² Himself accused of heresy, the historian P'awstos Buzand described the asceticism of these early communities as a most sublime form of withdrawal from the world and a total devotion to God.

These people left society and inhabited the wilderness to be devoted to the love of God [alone]. They lived in caves and crevices of the earth. Dressed only in a gown they walked around barefooted. Similar to the beasts of the desert they roamed marooned in the wilderness, feeding on grass and roots, tormented, uncertain, in hunger and thirst, all for the love of God.³³

Other historians too, such as Movsēs Xorenac'i, mention these migrations into Armenia at the time. It seems that many among them were also social dissidents and refused norms and authority. They lived in mixed and vagrant communities held together by principles of fraternal equality and the commandment of love. H. Melk'onean drew direct relations between the Mesopotamian Monastics and the Armenian Borborits. He also suggested that the word *borborit* was a distorted transliteration of two Syriac words, *bār-bāria*, or children of the wilderness.³⁴

During the 360s, persecutions by the Church of Caesarea drove the Monastics to Lesser Armenia where they were granted shelter by Bishop Eustathius of the Armenian Church in Sivās. Eustathius was a native of the city; he studied at the School of Alexandria where, according to his adversaries, he was exposed to the teachings of Arius. He was ordained by Patriarch Basil of Caesarea (or Saint Basil the Great, ca. 335–379, one of the three Cappadocian Fathers) and led the parish from 357 to 378. Eustathius was also said to have addressed critical epistles to the Patriarch in support of these ascetics. It was Eustathius who introduced celibacy and was the first to write regulations for religious orders.³⁵ It is almost certain that during the fifth century these sectarians moved to the east and came to be known as the Messalians or *Mcneans* (a distorted transliteration of the word *muṣalli*, or he who prays).³⁶

A woman called Simplika enrolled in the Eustathian opposition to Basil of Caesarea and the Church of the region. She too wrote letters harshly attacking the corrupt dogma and practices of the Church. As expected, she was anathematized and excommunicated.³⁷ In a letter addressed to the bishops of Rome (c.376), the Patriarch accused the church of Sivās of being “infected by heresy.”³⁸ He spoke of the aggravation caused by the “heretics,” who multiplied in the northern parts of Lesser Armenia.³⁹ Basil died in 379 but the persecutions against the Christians of Sivās continued. Shortly after his death, and within the same year, a council was held at Gangra, Paphlagonia (on the Black Sea coast of north central Asia Minor, situated between Bithynia to the west and Pontus to the east). The followers of Eustathius or the Heretics of Sivās were harshly anathematized and canons were issued against them.⁴⁰ Several versions of these canons are found at the Maštoc’ Manuscript Library (or the National Matenadaran) of Armenia.

The twenty-four canons of Gangra summarized and anticipated what can be qualified as the core of medieval Armenian dissident ideology up to the nineteenth century.⁴¹ This is demonstrated in a series of episodes and documents to the end of the Middle Ages and beyond. This ideology maintained an early version of communal Christianity and centered on a total rejection of authority. This was radically different from the “imperial” Christianity of the Church of Caesaria as well as Armenia (headed at the time by Catholicos Zawen I Manazkertc’i 377–381). The canons harshly accused the Eustathians of rejecting and ridiculing communion, fasting, ordination, ecclesiastical

hierarchy, and the role of the clergy. The council addressed anathema to all those who congregated outside churches and refused to be taught the liturgy of the Church by ordained priests. It also rebuked those who practiced asceticism and celibacy, accusing them of leading objectionable ways of life.

The canons specifically anathematized the following: those who considered marriage profane and preferred celibacy; those who considered eating meat profane; slaves who despised their masters; those who did not acknowledge married priests; those who despised the church and congregated elsewhere; those who dispensed with the role of the bishop in the sale of agricultural produce; those who did not marry considering marriage base and ridiculed those who married; those who ridiculed *agape* dinners (or “love feasts,” religious meals related to the Eucharist, practiced among early Christians); women who wore men’s clothes and abandoned their children refusing to nurse them; women who cut their hair short; those who hated their parents; those who read the Psalms without the proper attire; those who withdrew to a monastic-communal life; men who instead of following the views of their parents, shared their wives’ opinions. In some versions of the Canons, there were indirect references to iconoclastic tendencies, but similar remarks could only be later interpolations. In support of his initial thesis that the Eustathians of Sivās marked the beginnings of social–cultural dissidence and heresies, Xaç’ikean quotes a medieval text, as a direct account of the position and the role of the clergy at the time. The following is a literal translation:

Although the priest is equal in nature (*bnut’iwn*) to all people, he stands higher than everyone in rank, and is equal to angels. In relation to the common people, his position is similar to that of the *nayib* [deputy, *nā’ib* in Arabic,] of the monarch. Whoever has a request or a problem, he should pursue it through a mediator [to redeem himself]. Even he, who commits evil acts or causes harm, can redeem himself and obtain the king’s pardon by bribing the *vazir* [minister, *vazīr* in Arabic]. People constantly commit sins and stand guilty before God. All they have to do is present themselves to the priest and pay a contribution to the church the priest will then perform the proper prayers and mass, and insure the reconciliation of the sinner with God through his mediation.⁴²

Arabic terms indicate that the text was written at a much later date. But otherwise, it seems that the dissidents’ insistence on the equality

of all men before God and refusal of clerical authority and mediation continued and surfaced negatively in texts like the above. These trends also dismissed the veneration and adoration of saints as mediators between the common people and God. In general, egalitarian principles and practices characterized most dissident ideologies. In this context, gender equality was one of the declared and controversial ideas of these trends. In the eyes of the church, the demand of social equality was the equivalent of heresy. All expressions of discontentment and refusal to submit to authority—both secular and religious—were viewed as forms of rebellion against the order established by God and were treated as “heretical.”

To reduce the impact of dissident doctrines, and to control these communities, monasteries were established and measures taken by the Churches of Caesarea and Armenia. Homes for the poor, the handicapped, and orphans were opened in order to improve the image of the church in the eyes of the people. Later on, Catholicos Sahak issued a special decree against those who discriminated between the Church and the monastic orders. According to him, these practices sought to plant seeds of division and disrupt the unity of the faith.⁴³

After the Council of Gangra, the Monastics seem to have moved eastward into Greater Armenia and Ayrarat. In one of the legends about the origin of the Paulicians, to be discussed later, their heresiarch or founder/leader was said to be a certain *gund* (bald) woman named Marê. To avoid Byzantine persecution, she allegedly led her followers to Armenia. Reference to her baldness is reminiscent of Eustathian women, who were anathematized for cutting their hair short and dressing up, perhaps acting too, like men.

During the first half of the fifth century, Mcġnēans, Borborits, and Nestorians came to the forefront. According to Xaç’ikean, those who settled in Persian Armenia were known as Mcġnēans, while those on the Byzantine side, were the Borborits.⁴⁴ It is almost impossible to establish this observation and distinguish between the ideologies and practices of these trends. Eventually the two terms were used interchangeably often in derogatory references to simply “heretics,” who were also called “Manicheans.” By the testimony of church canons, and whatever their beliefs and the names in which they were known, these large communities were not just religious heretics. Dissidence is a very recent concept but the phenomenon of dissent is as old as human civilization. Disobedience and rebellion appear in many ancient scriptures too. Medieval histories show that rebellion was

often considered and treated as the equivalent of religious heresy. The defense and character of Socrates in Plato's *Apology* were most amazing motifs, among many others earlier and later on. *Haeresis* in Greek meant an action of taking a deliberate step, making a choice, and opening a discussion. It could refer "to any group or people having a clear doctrinal identity, such as a philosophical or medical school or a religious sect." For a long time, there was no value judgment placed on such a position, but gradually the term came to be used for heterodoxy, or deviant, false beliefs.⁴⁵

During the fifth century, persecutions against dissident communities spread both in Western and Eastern Armenia. As mentioned, the condition of Byzantium to allow the teaching of Armenian in Byzantine Armenia was said to be the eradication of rebellious factions. In Eastern Armenia the missionaries of Persian-backed Nestorians were active disguised as merchants.⁴⁶ This disguise was used by many sectarian missionaries—such as the Ismā'īlis—in the Near East. As told by Koriwn, the persecutions against these groups took place between 415 and 423. According to the History of Xorenac'i, the Armenian Church was executing imperial orders to either convert the *borboritons* or to exterminate them. Catholicos Sahak was said to have received the following from the Byzantine court: "Authority is bestowed upon you either to persuade [or convert] the sect of the Borborits or to persecute and expel them of your land."⁴⁷ Koriwn told that Mesrop covered the province of Gołt'n, parts of Ałwank' (or Caucasian Albania), and Gardmank' (north east of Lake Sewan), all on Persian-controlled land. Despaired of instructing the "wretched and obstinate race of the Barbarianos," he resorted to extremely harsh measures, wrote Koriwn. They were beaten, burnt, smeared with soot, exposed to public insults, imprisoned, and extradited.⁴⁸ Those who insisted on maintaining their "demonic faith" fled like wild beasts and "evil spirits" into Persian-controlled lands.⁴⁹

These dissident movements were considered enemies of Byzantium and of the Armenian Church. Among them there may have been pagans and Zoroastrian Armenians too. According to Tēr Minaseanc', the so-called Borborits were simply followers of Nestorius, who was anathematized by the Council of Ephesus in 431.⁵⁰ According to N. Garsoïan, who simplified the subject, all those who adhered to Syrian adoptionist Christianity, or "the first faith of Armenia" were classified as heretics and persecuted upon Byzantine orders.⁵¹

The relevance of the subject of social–religious dissidence for this work is its significance in the East–West conflicts of the time. During Arab–Greek wars dissident careers gained greater dynamism and these trends were politicized and militarized, as shall be discussed later. Armenian dissidence continued to be part of regional conflict to the end of the Middle Ages. Armenians were with and against both the East and West. For example, despite Byzantine objections, Syrian influence on Armenian Christianity continued and Armenians gave great significance to Theodorus of Tarsus, Theodore of Mepsuesta, Nestorius, Bar Sauma of Nisibis, Severius, Paul of Samosata, Mani, Marcion, Arius, and others. Their works were read during the lifetime of Mesrop, Sahak, and later on too.⁵²

B. The Councils of Šahapiwan (447/8) and Dwin (554/5)—Messalians, Nestorians, Paulicians

The canons of the Council of Šahapiwan (447/8) were the earliest statements about the position of the Armenian Church toward basic issues, including the Mcġnean heresy, but no mention was made of the Borborits. Canons 14, 19, and 20 were devoted to this subject. In section 144 of the *Armenian Book of Heresies* (*Girk' Herjwacotac'*), we find the following:

The sect of the Mcġneans originated from the Pythagoreans and flourished in Bisethia. [or Pisidia, a province in western Asia Minor, between Phrygia in the north and Lycia in the south, near modern Antalia]. The conduct of its followers and their actions are too shameful for us to describe. They are known under names such as Gungušeans, Sġleans, Aregaknoġ [sun worshipper] and Banġaraker [vegetarian].⁵³

Vegetarianism and sun worship were common to a number of sects, which otherwise were often identified by their locations. In addition to the ambiguities of the reports (by their enemies) about their doctrines, broad generalities inevitably draw similarities between the earlier sects in particular. The Pythagorean elements are obvious in their communal social system, beliefs in reincarnation and spiritual purification, etc. The most important fragment of information indirectly provided by the canons is that whatever Mcġneism was, it was not peculiar to the lower classes. The Council warned everyone, including bishops, nobles, military men, and commoners, from adhering to the heresy. Not only followers but also collaborators and all those

who provided shelter or concealed information were to be punished and anathematized. Being hamstrung, branded on the forehead with the fox-sign and sent to leprosaria were standard punishments. Children of the heretics were sent to special centers and some to monasteries.⁵⁴

As far as their doctrines were concerned, it took the Armenian Church a while to decide its position toward the Nestorians. In response to inquiries, the Byzantine Church encouraged the Armenians to reject Nestorianism as a heresy.⁵⁵ There is no mention of the Nestorians during the short period following the deaths of Mesrop and Sahak. They seem to have temporarily withdrawn to Edessa and Nisibis. But shortly thereafter, a major Nestorian figure, Bar Sauma, the metropolitan of Nisibis (435–489) appeared in Armenian history, and the subject of heresy/orthodoxy became a major aspect of regional conflict.

During the early years of the reign of Emperor Beroz of Persia (457–484), Bar Sauma managed to gain the support of the Persian court and Nestorianism was the official faith of the Persian Church. Soon, Armenians in Persian Armenia were urged to follow Nestorius.⁵⁶ Bar Hebraeus, T'ovma Arcruni, and Michael the Syrian, speak of Bar Sauma's efforts to preach Nestorianism in Armenia. According to Bar Hebraeus, Nestorius was warned against entering Armenia and stayed out.⁵⁷ But according to T'ovma, Bar Sauma arrived in the province of Mokk' (south and south west of Lake Van) and "sowed the seeds of his heresy there," but left after threats from Meršabuh Arcruni.⁵⁸ Bar Sauma retaliated. At the Persian court, he accused the Armenians of plotting with Byzantium against Persia. He produced letters from the Armenian Catholicos to the churches of the region inviting them to ally against the Persians. According to T'ovma, these allegations caused bloodshed.⁵⁹ During the incumbency of Catholicos Giwt (461–472), three Nestorians were said to have arrived in Armenia from the region of Antioch. He related that "Constantine, Petros, and T'eodoros preached against the Virgin Mary, rejecting her being God-Bearer" (or *theotokos*) and against the Cross as a holy object.⁶⁰ Between the years 502 and 506 the Persians and Byzantines were at war again and communications between Persian Armenians and Constantinople were severed. But the legacy of Sahak continued in Persian Armenia during the incumbency of Catholicos Yovhan I Mandakuni (478–490) too.⁶¹ The peace signed in 506/7 between the

two empires allowed a period of stability and some contacts with Constantinople were resumed.⁶²

According to Garsoïan, by the end of the fifth century Armenians had accepted the formulation of the *Henotikon*, which implied the rejection of Chalcedonian Christology.⁶³ The strongest threats at this time were Persian-backed Nestorians (anathematized at Ephesus in 431) centered in Khuzestân (at present one of the thirty provinces of Iran in its southwest, bordering Başrah) and the teachings of the metropolitan Bar Sauma of Nisibis. The Nestorians of Khuzestân were called *xužiks*.

When Nestorianism became the official faith of the Christians of Persia, the Armenian Church found itself in an extremely difficult position between the Pro-Byzantine Chalcedonians in the west and pro-Persian Nestorians in the east. In his Epistle to the “orthodox Christians of Persia,” Catholicos Babgên I Ōt’emsec’i from Vanand (incumbency 490–516) explained the position of the Armenian Church in the context of the Canons of the Council of Dwin, the capital of Persian Armenia in 506/7.⁶⁴ A delegation representing the “orthodox” Christians in Persia arrived in Dwin and met the council of bishops and declared that their community was close to the Armenian Church in its doctrines. On this occasion, the teachings of Mani, Nestorius, Diodorus, Theodorus, Paul of Samosata, etc., were denounced and all the heresiarchs anathematized. In the same year the Nestorians, though not Chalcedonians, were anathematized in a council of the Church.⁶⁵

In the midst of the East–West conflict, and despite the fact that it was not monophysitic, the Armenian Church led this anti-Chalcedonian camp.⁶⁶ In 530, Catholicos K’ristap’or Dirarinč’i (539–545) made several journeys in the region and sent epistles to the “orthodox” communities in Syria, Khuzestân, and other places. In 554/5 Nersēs II Aštarakec’i-Pagrewandc’i (548/9–556/7) summoned a council to discuss Nestorian expansion in Armenia. The most important of the three documents issued from the Council of Dwin was the “Pact of Union.”⁶⁷ The Council described the Nestorians as the cause of “spiritual calamity” and accused them of hosting the “outlaws” and sharing similar doctrines with the local Armenian sectarians. It expressed grave concern about the alarming increase in their numbers and their activities around the church of Manajihir Rajik. Describing them as the “inheritors” of early adoptionists—thus linking all sectarian trends—, the Council reiterated the anathema of the councils of Constantinople, Nicaea, and Ephesus. According to the Pact, the Nestorians took refuge

in Nisibis and from there they moved to Khuzestān and flourished in Persia enjoying the protection of the Persian court. It was from there, it explained, that members of the “evil sect of the Nestorians of Khuzistan” gradually penetrated into Armenia disguised as merchants. The Nestorian community grew and required a church and clergy to see to its needs. A monastery dedicated to the martyr Manajih̄r Rajik was built in 547–548. The Pact specifically warned the people against the claims of the Nestorians that they “shared the same faith” with the Armenians and allowing them to offer services, replacing the Armenian Church in some locations.⁶⁸ The term *Pawltikean* (*Pawlik* is the diminutive form of *Pawłos* or *Polos*, Paul) or Paulician appeared for the first time in this text, and according to scholars, this could only be a later interpolation.⁶⁹

Tēr Mkërtč'ean was the first to trace links between the early adoptionist trends of the second and third centuries and the Mcleans and Paulicians much later. According to him, after the expulsion of Paul of Samosata, the adoptionists fled Antioch, formed secret communities, and some found refuge in Persian-controlled territories. The Nestorians of Khuzestān mentioned in the Pact of Union were probably the descendants of Syrian adoptionists and simply joined the Nestorians during the fifth century.⁷⁰ In the middle of the sixth century the Council of Dwin in 554 again referred to the problem of large heterodox communities around the monastery and church of Manajih̄r Rajik. Nestorianism eventually became an aspect and tool of Persian policy toward the other Christians in the region and Armenians in particular. Consequently, participation in the Council of Dwin was practically a defiance of Persian authority.⁷¹ A direct indication to this effect is an additional document issued by Catholicos Nersēs II after the Council and the departure of the participants. He reminded those who attended and those who did not, of the necessity of abiding by the decisions of the Council. It seems that a number of participants were under pressure and had no intention of implementing the decisions after returning home. Those who had excused themselves received severe warning from the Catholicos. An addendum was issued after the Council, known as “Resolutions of the Holy Church concerning the Nestorians,” signed by Nersēs II and three other bishops. The record of the disputes around these matters at the time of the Council of Dwin, are preserved in the *Book of Letters*. By the end of the sixth century and during the early decades of the next, the Nestorian problem receded, and these communities moved to Ałwank' (Caucasian Albania) and

Georgia, where Tbilisi became their center. The merchant disguise was practiced there too.⁷²

It is hard to believe that the decisions of this Council had any practical results, but another objective was achieved: they defined the position of the Armenian Church toward the Council of Chalcedon and its Christology. The Council equated Chalcedonianism with Nestorianism⁷³ and the practice persisted to the twelfth century and beyond. Previously, the seemingly Monophysitic position of the Council of Dwin in 506/7 seemed to be a concealed reaction to the Council of Chalcedon. When Emperor Justinian I (518–527) expelled the Monophysites in 518, they moved to Alexandria where the polemics concerning the corruptibility of the body of Christ first emerged. The Julianists, who were also known as Phantasiasts, believed that to save man, Christ willingly took upon himself all the physical traits of humanity (like hunger, thirst, sweat, pain, etc.). Their adversaries, the Severians insisted that Christ's body was corruptible similar to those of humans, because in order to save man he had to have a corruptible body himself.⁷⁴ During the last decades of the sixth century and later on, the Armenian Church closely followed the dispute without taking an active part in it, and rejected both positions. It accepted the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria, as summarized in the dictum "one Nature united out of two."⁷⁵ Otherwise, there were Chalcedonian Armenians everywhere to the end of the Middle Ages. They were referred to as *cayt'*. The term gradually became synonymous with heretic. There is a rare Greek treatise written in 700 (originally written in Armenian) by an anonymous Armenian Chalcedonian author, addressed to the Armenians. From a Chalcedonian perspective, the text is a summary of the history of the relations between the Armenian and Byzantine churches from the Council of Nicaea in 325, to the year 700, and the political implications of the Chalcedonian and Monophysitic disputes.⁷⁶

After 575 the Armenian Church explicitly revealed its opposition to Chalcedonian Christology, as stated in the encyclical of Catholicos Abraham I (incumbency 607–615).⁷⁷ The location of the Catholicosate in Persian Armenia obviously gave Armenians more freedom, but the pact between Emperor Maurice of Byzantium (582–602) and Xusrō II of Persia (591–628) created complicated circumstances when a Chalcedonian anti-catholicos was appointed in Byzantine Armenia. Only after the collapse of the Persian Empire the Church could freely state and maintain its position.

Notes

1. See Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*, trans. and comment. Robert W. Thomson (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1976).
2. James Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Iranian Series, vol. V, 1987), 126.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 130.
5. John B. Henderson, *The Construction of Orthodoxy and Heresy: Neo-Confucian, Islamic, Jewish and Early Christian Patterns* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1998), 1.
6. Leo, *Hay Klerakan Diwanagitut'wně* [Armenian Clerical Diplomacy] (Anahit Hayrenakc'akan Ėnkerut'iwn, 1934—The book was withdrawn after publication.), 9.
7. Ibid., 23.
8. Ibid., 24–25.
9. Ibid., 34.
10. Ibid., 37.
11. Ibid., 41–42.
12. Joseph Laurent, *Arménie entre Byzance et l'Islam, depuis la conquête arabe jusqu'en 886* [Armenia between Byzantium and Islam from the Arab Conquest to 886], rev. ed. M. Canard (Lisbon: Gulbenkian Foundation, 1980), 177. The text: “Le dévouement absolu et l'amour exclusive qu'en d'autres temps et en d'autres pays on réserve à la patrie, les Arméniens les donnaient à leur religion. L'Arménie pour eux, c'était avant tout l'Église arménienne, ses institutions, sa foi et ses fidèles: c'était leur religion et leur nationalité indissolublement sauve tant que son organisation religieuse était intact.”
13. Jean Pierre Mahé, “Confession religieuse et identité nationale dans l'église arménienne du VIIe au XIe siècle,” in *Des parthes au califat: quatre leçons sur la formation de l'identité arménienne* [From Parthians to the Caliphate: Four Lessons on the Formation of Armenian Identity], ed. Nina Garsoïan and Jean Pierre Mahé (Paris: De Boccard, 1997), 59–78, 59.
14. Ibid., 60.
15. Ibid., 75.
16. See Elišē, *History of Vardan and the Armenian War*, trans. and comment. Robert W. Thomson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982; Delmar: Caravan Books, 1993).
17. Very little is known about the life of Eznik. After the invention of the Alphabet, he and Yovsēp (another student of Mesrop) traveled to Syria then Byzantine centers to study and translate. Around 433 he returned and was ordained Bishop of Bagrewand. Eznik's work takes its special importance in the context of his times.
18. See Nina Garsoïan, *L'église arménienne et le grand schisme d'orient* [The Armenian Church and the Great Schism of the Orient]—Corpus Scriptorum Orientalum, vol. 574, Subsidia Tomus 100 (Louvain: Peeters, 1999), 63.
19. The book survived in a single manuscript copied in 1280, and restored in 1671. The title page was missing and had no title.
20. First published in Smyrna in 1762/3, it was called *Girk' Enddimut'eanc'* or *Elc Atandoc'* by Nalian, the editor, because the title page was missing. He also divided the book into four chapters: against the pagans, against

- the Greek philosophers, against the Persian Zoroastrians, and against the Marcionites. If instead of a philologist, a scholar with a philosophical background had done the editing, the book may have had a different title and perhaps destiny. Several publications and translations followed in Vienna, Paris, Tbilisi, and Armenia. In all, the initial title was maintained, to establish my comment on Armenian culture of authority.
21. Eznik Kołbac'i, *Etc Ałandoc' or Ałandneri Herk'umě* [Refutation of the Sects], trans. A. A. Abrahamian (Erevan: Hayastan Publications, 1970), 31. The English translation: Eznik Gołbac'i, *A Treatise on God Written in Armenian by Eznik of Kolb*, trans. and notes Monica J. Blanchard and Robin Darling Young (Leuven: Peeters, 1998).
 22. See B. Lewis, "Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam," *Studia Islamica* 1 (1953): 43–63.
 23. E. Tēr Minaseanc', *Hayoc' Ekelec'ineri Yaraberut'iwinnerě Asorwoc' Ekelec'ineri het* [The Relations of the Armenian Church with the Syrian Churches] (Ejmiacin: Ejmiacin, 1908), 3.
 24. Lewon Xaç'ikean, *Pok'r Hayk'i Soc'ialakan Šaržumneri Patmut'iwnic'* [Of the History of the Social Movements of Pok'r Hayk'] (Erevan: Haykakan SSR GA Publications, 1951), 5.
 25. Ibid., 14.
 26. Tēr Minaseanc', *The Relations*, 4–11.
 27. Movsēs Xorenac'i, *Movsēs Xorenac'woy Patmut'iwñ Hayoc'* [History of the Armenians], vol. II (Venice: St. Lazar, 1843), 66. The English translation: Movsēs Xorenac'i, *History of the Armenians*, trans. and comment. Robert W. Thomson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978).
 28. This legend seems to have several sources, E. Tēr Minaseanc' lists some, see *The Relations*, 7–9.
 29. Nina Garsoïan, *The Paulicians* (The Hague: Mouton, 1967), 227. The source is the French translation of the *History* of T'ovma Arcruni, *Histoire des Ardzrouni*, trans. M. Brosset, *Collection des Historiens Arméniens*, 2 vols. [Collection of Armenian Historians] (St. Petersburg: Imprimerie de l'Académie Imperiale des Sciences, 1874–1876,), vol. I, 1ff.
 30. Lewon Tēr Petrosean, "Hayerě Mijnadarian Mcbinum ew Mec Hayk'i Harawayin Nahangnerum" [*The Armenians in Medieval Nisibin and Southern Provinces of Greater Armenia*], *Patma-Banasirakan Handēs* 3 (1979): 80–92, 81. His main source is Jean Maurice Fiey, "Nisibe Metropole Syriaque Orientale et ses Suffrages des Origines à nos Jours, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium (CSCO) 388, Subs. 54 (Louvain, 1977).
 31. For a general survey of the medieval sects in Armenia, see E. Tēr Minaseanc', *Mijnadarean Ałandneri Cagman ev Zargac'man Patmut'iwnic'* [Of the History of the Origin and Development of the Medieval Sects] (Erevan, 1968).
 32. H. G. Mel'onean, *Hay-Asorakan Yaraberut'iwñneri Patmut'iwunic'- III-V Darer* [From the History of Armenian and Syriac Relations—Third-Fifth Centuries] (Erevan: Haykakan SSRH GA Publications, 1970), 64–65.
 33. Pawstos Buzand, *Pawstos Buzandac'woy Patmut'iwñ Hayoc'* [History of the Armenians] (Venice: St. Lazar, 1914), 340–41. The English translation: P'awstos Buzand. *The Epic Stories Attributed to P'awstos Buzand*. trans.

- and comment. Robert W. Thomson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).
34. Xaç'ikean, *From the History*, 68.
35. Ibid., 21–26.
36. Ibid., 33–34.
37. Ibid., 30.
38. Ibid., 35.
39. Ibid., 38.
40. Ibid., The source is Socrates Scholasticus, *Sokrata Skolastikosi Ekeṭac'akan Patmut'iwn* [The History of the Church] (Vaṭaršapat: Vaṭaršapat, 1879), 206.
41. Our source is Xaç'ikean's summary of the Canons, *From the History*, 104–9.
42. Xaç'ikean, *From the History*, 45. The source is Mat. Ms. # 1109, f. 221a. The text as quoted by Xaç'ikean:T 'T'ēpet bnut'eamb k'ahanayn amēn mardoy hawasar ē, ayl kargiwn mec ē k'an zmard ew ew hreštakac' hwasar, orpēs *nayib* t'agaworin ew žołowurdn. ew um or xndirk' lini t'agaworēn mījnordi jeṛawk'n katari. ew ov or vnasakar lini, tay kašaṛs *vazirin* ew na nora mījnordu'amb hašti t'agaworn ēnd mahapartin. Aysink'n mardik hanapaz melanč'en ew patžapart linen Astucoy, vasn aṛ gan aṛ k'ahanayn ew tan žami ew pataragi dram ew k'ahanayn aṛnu ew iwr aržanawor aṭawt'iwk'n vasn pataragawn mījnordē ew zAstuac haštec'nē ēnd melaworin'.
43. Ibid., 61–62. See A. Ľldčean, *Kanongirk' Hayoc'* [Book of Armenian Canons] (Tbilisi: N. Aghanian Press, 1913), 29.
44. Xaç'ikean, *From the History*, 71.
45. Henderson, *The Construction of Orthodoxy and Heresy*, 17.
46. Melk'onean, *From the History*, 44–45.
47. Movsēs Xorenac'i, *Patmut'iwn Hayoc'* [History of the Armenians] (Tbilisi: N. Aghanian Press, 1913), Book III/57, 336–37.
48. Koriwn, *Life of Maštoc'* [Vark' Maštoc'i], ed. M. Abelean (Erevan: Haybedhrad, 1941), 66, 68.
49. Ibid., 40.
50. E. Tēr Minasean, *Mījnadarean Aṭandneri Cagman ew Zargac'man Patmut'iwnic'* [Of the History of the Origin and Development of the Medieval Sects] (Erevan, 1968), 67–68.
51. Garsoīan, *Paulicians*, 223.
52. Koriwn, *Life of Maštoc'*, 86; E. Tēr Minasean, "Nestorakanut'iwnē Hayastanum [Nestorianism in Armenia]." *Grakan-Banasirakan Hetaxuzumner* I (Erevan, 1941), 178.
53. See Xaç'ikean, *From the History*, 78.
54. See Ľldčean, *Book of Armenian Canons*, 73, 80–82. English translation: Garsoīan, *Paulicians*, 82–83.
55. Garsoīan, *Paulicians*, 179–86.
56. L. Melk'isēt-Bēk', *Vrac'akan Aṭbiwrnerē Hayastani ew hayeri masin* [Georgian Sources about Armenia and Armenians] (Erevan, 1934), 35.
57. Gregorii Barhebraei, *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum* [Ecclesiastical Chronicle], 3 vols., vol. III, ed. Abbeloos et Lamy (Louvain: Peeters, 1872–1877), 71.
58. T'ovma Arcruni, *History*, 81.
59. Ibid.

60. Tēr Minasean, "Nestorianism in Armenia," 198–99.
61. Garsoïan, *L'église arménienne*, 133.
62. Ibid., 135.
63. Ibid., 156.
64. See "T'ult' Hayoc' i Parss ai Ullap'aïs [Epistle of the Armenians to the Orthodox Christians of Persia]," in *Girk' T't'oc'* [Book of Letters] (Tbilisi: T. Rõtineanc' and Sharadzē Press, 1901), 41–46.
65. Garsoïan, *L'église Arménienne*, 137.
66. Tēr Minasean, "Nestorianism in Armenia," 211.
67. See the text of the Pact or Oath of Union and its English translation in Garsoïan, *Paulicians*, 88–89, 236–37; Seta B. Dadoyan, *The Fatimid Armenians: Cultural and Political Interaction in the Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), Appendix II.
68. Tēr Minasean, "Nestorianism in Armenia," 215.
69. Garsoïan, *Paulicians*, 87.
70. Karapet Tēr Mkërtč'ean, *History of the Armenian Church-Part I* (Vałaršapat: Vałaršapat, 1908), 207–8.
71. Tēr Minasean, "Nestorianism in Armenia," 222.
72. Ibid., 230.
73. Tēr Minaseanc', *Relations of the Armenian Church*, 77.
74. Ibid., 84–85.
75. Ibid., 88–89, 105. Cyril regarded the embodiment of God in the person of Jesus Christ to be so mystically powerful that it spread out from the body of the God-man into the rest of the race, to reconstitute human nature into a graced and deified condition of the saints, one that promised immortality and transfiguration to believers. The composition of the Trinity consisted of one divine essence (*ousia*) in three distinct modes of being (hypostases). These distinct modes of being were the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Then, when the Son became flesh and entered into the world, these two divine and human natures both remained but became *united* in the person of Jesus. This resulted in the slogan "One Nature united out of two" being used to encapsulate the theological position of this Alexandrian bishop.
76. *La Narratio de Rebus Armeniae*, ed. and comment. Gerard Garritte, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, vol. 32. Subsidia tome 4 (Louvain: Peeters, 1952). For the Armenian translation see: H. Bart'ikean, ed., "Narratio de Rebus Armeniae- *Yunarēn T'argmanut'eamb mez Hasac mi hay K'alk'odonakan Skzbnagir* [An Armenian Chalcedonian Primary source]," *Banber Matenadarani* 6 (1962): 457–70.
77. Garsoïan, *L'église arménienne et le grand schism d'orient*, 402–3.

Early Arab Campaigns and the Regulation of Relations According to the Medinan Legacy

I. Medieval *Armīnyah* between Byzantium and the Islamic World—The Early Period

The medieval *Armīnyah* in Arab sources was a very broad area. It included Georgia, southern parts of the Black Sea, Lesser Armenia (*P'ok'r Hayk'*, the region from Erzinjān to Melitene, west of the Upper Euphrates) in the west, Upper Mesopotamia, the Cilician Gates, the Syrian Gates, the region south of Lake Van, north of Lake Urmia, and modern Azerbaijan on the Caspian Sea. This *Armīnyah* was divided into four (sometimes five) *Armīnyahs*: the first was Albania (*Aḥuank'*), the second Georgia (*Vrastan* or *Virk'*), the third covered the eastern parts of Greater Armenia, and the fourth its western parts. In Arab histories and generally literature, the term *Armīnyah* referred to one or more, or all four *Armīnyahs*. The context is always the guide.

The Arab Period in *Armīnyah* lasted four, and not two and a half centuries—from 640 to 884, the date of the coronation of the first Bagratuni king, as it is commonly held. The early campaigns in the late 630s were the start of Arab predominance, while the establishment of the Seljuk Turks in eastern and central Asia Minor designated its end. The fall of Manazkert/Manzikert in 1071 marked the end of a major period and the beginning of a new one in the Near East.

During the first fifty years of their occupation, the Arabs were consolidating their positions in Asia Minor. In the south, rivalries for the succession of the Prophet ended in the assassination of Caliph 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭalīb (656/35H–661/40H) or the Prophet 'Alī and the rise of the

Meccan Umayyads (*al-Umawiyyūn*) in 661. It was in the 690s—not in 701 as generally accepted—that the Umayyads established direct rule over Armīnyah through their commissioners or the *ostikans* (as the Armenians called them). In 862 the ‘Abbāsids (750/133H–1258/656H) allowed Armenians a measure of internal sovereignty under Ašot Bagratuni, proclaimed Prince of Princes (or *shāhanshāh*, *baṭriq al-baṭāriqah*, *baṭriq* meaning naxarar, lord, noble, prince). In 884 he became the first Bagratuni *t’agawor* or king. Soon, other branches of the Bagratunis as well as the Arcrunis (in their south) and the Siwnis (in their east) had their dynastic principalities or kingdoms by Arab support and encouragement. By the ninth century most of the Hellenophile nobles had migrated or disappeared.

Even though the two hundred years from the last decades of the ninth century to the last quarter of the eleventh century (or the Arab Period) came to be known as the Age of Kingdoms, neither of the two empires recognized the Armenian princes as true kings or sovereign monarchs. The Byzantines explicitly avoided the term, and the Arabs used the word *malik* or king loosely. It meant lord, master, ruler, also king in the traditional sense. For the Armenian dynasts, they often used the word *takfūr*, a transliterate form of the Armenian *t’agawor*.

By late ninth century, the ‘Abbāsids were losing control over eastern Asia Minor and Byzantium was slowly moving eastward. Turkic tribes did not find difficulty in penetrating the ‘Abbāsid military and administration. In all cases, as of the first Arab raids after mid-630s, Armenia and Armenians were becoming part of the Islamic world. The most immediate and significant result of Arab expansion into Asia Minor was the unification of Armenia following the two partitions of the land, first in 387 between the Roman Empire and Sassanids, then in 591 between the latter and Byzantium.¹

Traditionally, the Armenian nobility was divided in its loyalty between East and West; by and large it resented central authority. The more flexible and pragmatic houses and individuals collaborated with the Muslims without abandoning their religious affiliation with the Christian West. The Hellenophiles had a harder time and eventually dispersed.

By the terms of Islamic policy toward the *dhimmīs* or the non-Muslims, the Armenian Church and religious institutions were protected, the clergy respected, and both were also exempted from taxes, at least theoretically. As we shall see, one of the most important results of Arab occupation was the empowerment of the Church and

the consolidation of its position. Much later, the Ottoman *millet* system revived this tradition; in Near Eastern countries religious heads represented the communities.

The Muslim-heterodox Armenian alliance and the massive politicization–militarization of Armenian dissidence was another major consequence of Arab rule in Armenia. Sympathies and alliances began soon after Arab penetration and the withdrawal of Byzantine armies. Social–religious dissidence was not new in the region, but the alliance between the Muslims and dissident factions or the sects such as the Paulicians, T'ondrakians, and others was. The politicization and militarization of Armenian dissidents greatly complicated matters for both the Church and the nobility. This aspect of Armenian–Islamic interactions was only remotely hinted at by most historians but never studied; arguments presented later detect missing links in several obscure episodes that can alter the general picture.

Paulician military–political activity may have begun after the middle of the seventh century following Arab occupation. Conservative historians like P. Sarkisian and others see the Paulician phenomenon as the direct result of the arrival of Arab tribes in Armenia and the support the adoptionistic–iconoclastic trends found in them. The Paulicians were adoptionists and rejected the Trinitarian doctrines.

While Byzantine deportations of the adversaries of the Empire into the western and northern borders in Europe caused the diffusion of sectarian ideologies in these locations, the arrival of the Arabs contributed to the politicization and militancy of the dissidents. Loosely labeled as Paulicians, large factions gradually gathered on what was to become the Borderlands area between the Byzantine and Islamic empires from the upper reaches of the Euphrates to north Syria, the Tigris, and further east and south. During the 'Abbāsid period, the Borderlands were divided between the *thughūr* (plural of *thaghr*, gate, passage) and right behind them the *'awāšim* (plural of *'āšimah*, metropolis, capital). Soon, what is known as the Borderlands or the Frontier lands metamorphosed into a peculiar world between the Muslim East and Christian West. New types of hybrid communities and syncretistic cultures developed and continued beyond the middle Ages.

The Borderlands or Akritics and syncretism are major paradigms to explain many aspects and elements of Near Eastern history during the Arab period and later. Otherwise, purist and essentialist paradigms

either fail to detect the distinctness of these locations and cultures or distort them. Indeed, this aspect of Armenian and Near Eastern history has barely been noticed. No literature has survived of these times and peoples, with the exception of several versions of the Byzantine *Epic of Digenis Akritis* and some popular poetry in local languages and dialects. Only recently western historians have begun thinking along these lines and questioning purist simplifications. This study is a contribution in this respect.

II. A Brief Survey of Sources—Arab and Armenian

Armenian accounts present great value for the early Arab invasions because the authors were contemporaneous to the events described. Arab histories and geographies of these episodes appeared decades and perhaps a century later. The accuracy and perspectives of all the accounts present a different challenge. In general however, as in all cases, Arab sources are absolutely essential for the understanding of Armenia and Armenians under Islam.

Two peculiarities distinguish Arab accounts: geographic and ethnic. As mentioned earlier, Arab histories are much more expansive because the medieval *Armīnyah* in Arab sources was a very broad area. The second is the term *armanī* (or Armenian). The word *armanī* referred equally to those who were natives and/or inhabitants of *Armīnyah* and those who were ethnic Armenians who lived elsewhere. Otherwise there were no restrictions on their religious and narrowly cultural backgrounds. In other words, the term *armanī* was very similar in use and connotation to the word *‘arabī* or Arab. Based on chronicles, fragments and mere references, it is highly possible that there were individuals and groups identified as *armanī* who did not speak Armenian and some were not even Christian like the *Ruzzīks* and the *Boghusaks*. They were simply Muslim Armenians not necessarily of *ghulām* or *mamlūk* (military slave) background. Many individual cases in almost all the periods and places support this observation. Furthermore, non-Armenians who were natives of *Armīnyah* were also referred to as *armanī* after their place of birth and/or residence. Consequently, it is possible to argue that being broader in connotation, the historic record of *Armīnyah* and *al-arman* in medieval Arab sources is richer and often more expressive of the complexities of the Armenian condition and experience in the medieval Islamic world. This is true of later periods too. Despite being enframed by religious perspectives, Arab histories reconstructed direct and vivid images

of the diffused and dynamic patterns of Armenian political careers and cultures in the Islamic world. More importantly, *Armīnyah* and *al-arman* were presented as indigenous elements of the Near East and the narratives did not single them out from the regional texture. Here lay the significance of these sources and the legitimacy of the insistence in this work to re-evaluate Armenian historiography with this peculiarity in mind. It is true that modern Armenian historians are mostly aware of major Arab sources and translated sections from Ibn al-Athīr, Yāqūt, and others. However, many of these scholars seem to be reluctant to process the information and consider novel perspectives accordingly. Many authors never made the connections between seemingly fragmentary data in order to review the existing narratives. Instead, often in a medieval fashion, some of them isolated selected facts to support desired hypotheses and images of Armenians. As a result, entire episodes were rearranged, edited, or simply lost.

Furthermore, the historic relevance of folklore, arts, inscriptions, and popular poetry-songs was poorly perceived and considered. For example, the studies of Alexander Xaç'atrean (who knew Arabic well) on Arabic inscriptions in Armenia from the eighth to the sixteenth centuries (also translated into Arabic)² is an interesting beginning. According to him, over five hundred inscriptions have been discovered so far, mostly of the tenth century and later, both in Eastern and Western Armenia. These are mainly on tombstones, smaller memorial structures, and rarely on larger structures such as fortresses, palaces, and monasteries. Names of about forty calligraphers have been recorded so far and in general these inscriptions provide very valuable material.³ Only few of these inscriptions came from the Arab period, while their number increased in the Turkish and Mongol periods. Next to the Arabic and Armenian, inscriptions in Turkish were added. Interestingly, Islamic architectural influences and closer interactions too appeared after the tenth century.

The question of knowledge of Arabic among Armenians is in turn poorly studied. We know that the Bagratunis and the Zak'arids later on, knew Arabic. Being involved in administrative and commercial ties they had to communicate with Muslims of various ethnic and political backgrounds. Most cities were cosmopolitan and under Muslim control, and naturally urban communities had a higher level of knowledge of Arabic than the rural population. For example, there are many grammatical and spelling errors in the Arabic inscriptions of the village of Orotn in Siwnik' (southern part of the Republic). But

inscriptions in Akhlāt (or Xlat) on the northwestern shores of Lake Van, a cosmopolitan city always liked by Arabs, are superior and follow Syrian traditions in the formulation of phrases and calligraphy.⁴

Armenian troubadour-popular poetry/song (*gusanakan erg*) is probably the most direct source not only for historians but anthropologists and social historians too. Already in the tenth century, Arab poetic forms were applied by Grigor Narekac'i (d. 1003) and Grigor Magistros (d. 1058). Many songs in the folklore use the well-known Arabic *yā-laylī* phrase ("oh my night") as *yalali* at the beginning and/or end of sentences.⁵ Furthermore, there are many poems and poetic cycles about "forbidden" love between a Muslim (often woman) and a Christian (often man). An immediate example is a long cycle of song/poems on the controversial love affair between a certain Christian Armenian man called Yovhannēs and a Muslim girl called Ayša (or Ā'ishā). Some of these song/poems were ascribed to familiar figures, such as poet, theologian, and philosopher from Erzinjān/Erznka, Yovhannēs Erznkac'i (d. 1293). The motif existed before him and continued long after him too.⁶ These and many more fragments of information still await analysis. As the historian Leo observed many decades ago, the question of Arab influences was never genuinely posed by Armenian historians; medieval authors, who were members of the clergy, he said, "took great care in avoiding the proofs and concealing the facts."⁷

As a large and vital province of the Caliphate, Armīnyah was always part of most Arab geographies and travel chronicles from al-Ya'qūbī to Ibn Baṭṭūṭa. Ninth- and tenth-century authors such as Ibn al-Faḡīh, al-Istarkhī, al-Balkhī, Ibn Ḥawqal, al-Muqaddasī, gave ample information on various Armenian locations and their peculiarities. As only few Armenians after the philosopher-mathematician Anania Širakac'i (seventh century) concerned themselves with geography, a great deal of geographic information on Armīnyah is to be found only in Arab, and some Greek and Syriac sources.

Of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century geographers, Yāqūt's (al-Shaykh al-Imām Shehāb ed-Dīn Abū 'Abdallāh Yāqūt Ibn 'Abdallāh al-Ḥamawī al-Rūmī al-Baghdādī, 1178–1227) *Kitāb Mu'jam al-Buldān* (or Dictionary of Countries, completed in 1224) is the most important of Arab geographies. Abū'l-Fidā' (Ismā'il Ibn 'Imād ed-Dīn) has scattered yet precious information on certain events and individuals. One of these is Qaṭr al-Nadā or Badr al-Dujā (d. 1057–8/449H), the Armenian slave-girl, who was the mother of 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Qā'im.

He has interesting details on the fall of Antioch in which Armenians were involved, on Nāwīkī Aqsiz (of Georgian–Armenian background), the Fāṭimid Armenian viziers, Ḥusām ed-Dīn Lūlū al-Ḥājib (d. 1200, believed to be an Armenian officer in Ayyūbid Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn's administration), etc. Abu'l-Fidā' is also a basic source for Cilician history and geography, the Crusaders, the geographies of Fourth Armenia and Upper Mesopotamia. Excerpts of these geographies about Armenia and Armenians were translated into Armenian and published during the early 1900s.⁸

Sebēos and Lēvond (seventh–eighth centuries) are the earliest and most important sources for the early phases of Arab conquests. The alleged *History of Šapuh Bagratuni* covers the ninth century but from a Bagratuni perspective. This source is also very useful for understanding the conflict between this dynastic house and the Hellenophile Mamikoneans and others in that camp. The tension between the Easternizing and Westernizing camps continued and left a deep impact on the histories as well. The Armenian sources are our only sources on the internal rivalries between the naxarars⁹ (*baṭriqs*, as the Arabs called them),¹⁰ their struggle for precedence, involvement in uprisings and above all, policies toward the rival powers. Arcruni and Bagratuni propaganda reached its apex at this time, as reflected in these histories. For the naxarars and the Church too, the classical or fifth-century legacies of faith, language, and ancestral values were criteria to establish legitimacy and valor. Naturally, Arab authors did not concern themselves with internal quarrels of the Armenians.

Of the tenth century, the histories of T'ovma Arcruni and pro-Bagratuni Yovhan Drasxanakertc'i are essential narratives of Arab rule in Armenia at the time, especially valuable for the understanding of ostikans, taxes, uprisings, and the tribal emirates. About the latter, even though few Armenian historians refer to them (such as Step'anos Taronec'i-Asolik on the Kurdish Marwānids), detailed information is to be found in Arab sources. As mentioned earlier, medieval Armenian histories had partisan objectives and must be read as special accounts. Lēvond (eighth century, covers 632–788) served Bagratuni propaganda and played a significant role in the “war of histories” between the Maimikoneans, the Arcrunis, and the Bagratunis. Obviously the history of T'ovma was designed to exalt the Arcrunis. In all cases, the revolts of the eighth century were compared to the fifth-century paradigm of the history of the Vardananc' War against the Zoroastrian Persians by Eḫšē. The Arcrunis were depicted as the “inheritors” of

the fifth-century Mamikoneans while the Bagratunis were edited out. The other side did the same for the Bagratunis. On the ground, narrower interests decided the course of actions, as we shall see, and in all, the pro-Eastern and pro-Western policies underlay the narratives. Albania (Aḷuank', south west of modern Azerbaijan) in the north west of Iran was very closely connected to Armenians and was often part of Armenian histories, such as the history of Movsēs Kaḷankadwac'ī/Dasxuranc'ī known as the *History of Albania* (*Patmut'wn Aḷuanic'*),¹¹ and that of Step'anos Ōrbelean.¹²

Arab sources on the period of Arab domination in Armenia are abundant. The early conquests of Aḷjznik', Taron and Barjr Hayk' (between Ayrarat and the Upper Euphrates) are covered by al-Wāqiti (748–823, this history has survived partially in later sources). He was a contemporary of Hārūn al-Rashīd (786–809), and made extensive use of the palatine libraries of Damascus and Baghdad.¹³ *Kitāb al-Kharāj* of Abū Yūsuf (731–798) is very extensively used by all contemporary Armenian historians. From the ninth century, Aḥmad Ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī's *Futūḥ al-Buldān* (Conquest of Countries) is one of the most important sources on Arab campaigns into Armenia. Al-Balādhurī gave detailed information on the campaign of Ḥabīb Ibn Maslamah into Armenia in 654, Arab rule and policies, the major uprisings against the Arabs during the eighth and ninth centuries, and Armenian chronicles. Excerpts of this history were translated by B. Xalat'ean.¹⁴

Other basic sources of the ninth century are Dinawārī's *Kitāb al-Akḥbār al-Ṭiwāl*, and Aḥmad Ibn Abū Ya'qūb al-Ya'qūbī's *Kitāb al-Buldān* (Book of Countries). This history ends at the events of the year 872–873, and is a classic source. Having spent part of his life in Armīnyah, al-Ya'qūbī was well acquainted with the people and their history. It is through him that we have a complete record of the local Arab commissioners or ostikans, the Zaḥḥāfi Amirs and the other tribal emirates in Armenia. Excerpts have been translated again by B. Xalat'ean. H. O. Adamean has done a more extensive compilation of excerpts.¹⁵ Al-Ṭabarī's (Abu Ja'far Ibn Zarīr, 838–923) *Ta'rikh al-Rusul wa'l-Mulūk* (History of Messengers and Kings) also covers the period of Arab rule in Armenia and ends at the year 914–915. Again, excerpts are available in translation by Xalat'ean, as mentioned earlier. There are few references to Armīnyah in Al-Mas'ūdī's (Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Alī Ibn al-Ḥusayn) *Murūj al-Dhahab* (Prairies of Gold).¹⁶ The latter even mentions Urartu, the myth of Ara and Šamiram, and has a description

of the Caucasus. Ibn Miskawayh's (d. 1030) *Kitāb Tajārib al-Umam* (Book of the Experiences of Nations) has very valuable information on the Bagratuni period and the Arab emirates in Armenia. Of the ninth century, there are few more figures of lesser importance. These are Ṣalībī (d. 1038), Udbī (931–1036), and Birūnī (973–1048). Ibn al-Azraq al-Fāriqī's *History* or *Ta'rikh al-Fāriqī*, is another major source on the Qaysid and Marwānid Emirates.¹⁷

Perhaps the most complete Arab history of Armenia and the Bagratuni period in particular (884–1045), is Ibn al-Athīr's ('Izz ed-Dīn Abū'l-Ḥasan 'Alī Ibn Muḥammad, 1160–1233) *Al-Kāmil fī'l-Ta'rikh*. (Universal History). This history starts from the beginning of the world, as most medieval histories did, and ends at the events of the year 1231/628H. Ibn al-Athīr was the son of a high official at the Zankīs of Moṣul and a native of al-Jazīrah, in Korčayk' (north east of Greater Syria or al-Shām). He was with the Atabeks of Aleppo when he died. Excerpts of *al-Kāmil* are translated and made extensive use of by Armenian historians.¹⁸

For the period between the tenth and fourteenth centuries, there are few major Armenian sources. Aristakēs Lastivertc'i is essential for Byzantine rule, the T'ondrakians, and early Seljuk invasions. Despite inaccuracies, the *Chronicle* (*Žamanakagrut'iwn*) of Matt'ēos Urhayec'i or Matthew of Edessa is now an internationally known source for the Seljuks and the Crusaders in particular. Of the twelfth century, the book of Armenian civil laws, called *Datastanagirk'* (literally "book of judgment") by Mxit'ar Gosh is also descriptive of the age. Vardan Patmič', Samvėl Anec'i, Kirakos Ganjakec'i, Step'anos Ōrbelean, and few others are our sources for the tenth–thirteenth centuries. Of the Syriac authors the most essential are Bar Hebraeus, Dionysius of Tall Mahre and most importantly, Michael the Syrian.¹⁹ Georgian sources were compiled by Melkisēt'-Bēk.²⁰

III. Early Arab Campaigns: Armīnyah between Arabs and Byzantines

Byzantine withdrawal from *al-Shām* or Greater Syria began in 636, after the defeat at the Battle of Yarmūk (a tributary of the River Jordan) in August of that year. Khālīd Ibn al-Walīd was at the head of the Islamic armies and on the opposite side, the Armenian Ba'annes (or Vahan) led the Byzantine armies (having been proclaimed emperor shortly before the battle). After this defeat, Ba'annes was said to have retired in a monastery at the Sinai.²¹ The warrior-monk figure became

a motif and was followed by many Christian—Greek, Armenian, and Crusader—military men, princes and kings.

A year later, the Battle of al-Qādisiyah in 637 put an end to the Persian Empire and an entire era in the Near East. The early conquests inevitably changed the balance of power in favor of the Muslims. By 640s Arab armies were spreading beyond north Syria into the southern parts of Armenia then east and north of it. Muslim rule unified Armenia. Being on the Borderlands between the two empires, the southern districts of Ajnik' and Korčayk' always remained peripheral regions.²² They had a mixed population and culture. During the 'Abbāsid period they were officially part of the Borderlands and havens for syncretistic and dissident factions.

In the case of Arab histories, much of the material about the *futūh*, or the early conquests, was accumulated in the course of oral transmission. Rivalries for succession and schisms developed before the end of the first century of Islam and shaped the various narratives in such a way that it is now almost impossible to isolate the facts from the literary texture of these narratives. At any rate, Muslims saw their successes as "the working out of God's will on earth."²³ In the new Near Eastern order, all sides and factions in the entire region, including the more or less marginal dissident trends, had to decide their political agendas and careers. As of the first decades of Arab penetration, the East–West conflict dominated the scene and reflected it. As we read the Armenian histories, we see that on the level of the literature, the Caliphate replaced anti-Byzantine Persia and Islam replaced Zoroastrianism. The classical frameworks and the paradigms of Elišē's *Vardadanc'* were revived. Armenian histories of the Arab period depicted the Armenians as a small yet unified nation fighting a formidable enemy of another faith. The situation on the ground was very different. In spite of the effort to draw a nation under a universal value system, as Thomson says, "the historical texts reflect the fragmented state of Armenian society."²⁴ The Mamikoneans, Ggunis, and the Kamsarakans were almost consistently pro-Byzantine. The Bagratunis, Arcrunis, Siwnis, and the Rštunis had more pragmatic, flexible, and generally pro-eastern policies, without however antagonizing the Greeks. Hewsen describes this ancient Armenian society as

.... dominated by a nobiliary class based on the existence of a large number of sovereign principalities ruled by their own dynastic princes, living on vast estates, rather than being an urban society

based on large municipal centers such as existed in the Roman and Byzantine empires. Thus Christian Armenia developed an ecclesiastical system in which bishops, instead of being appointed to cities, as they were in the Empire, were attached to the individual princely houses rather than as court prelates By the fifth century, bishops had been appointed to all the major Armenian princely houses it logically follows that if we were to match the list of the Episcopal sees against a list of the princely houses, the two lists should largely coincide, and where they do not do so an explanation should be readily forthcoming.²⁵

Sebeos, the only contemporary author to the early Arab campaigns into Asia Minor, clearly saw a new order settling in the region. The text attributed to him was written at the end of the first phase and covered the three main thrusts of the Arabs into the Byzantine and Sassanian worlds, as well as Transcaucasia.²⁶

After the assassination of Caliph 'Umar in 644/24H, his successor 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān gave the governorship of al-Shām to Mu'āwiyah. Arab tribes were settled in the Jazīrah in the north east of Syria and soon other tribes moved in from the north-east of Arabia.²⁷ Melitene became an Arab base, but no mention is made of forced conversions or religious persecutions at this time.²⁸ In 650/30H, Caliph 'Uthmān sent a series of expeditions to Iran and new territories were occupied.

The first Arab troops penetrated Armenia from Upper Mesopotamia. In 638–639/17H Iyād Ibn Ghānim reached as far as Xlat' and the city of Dvin fell. According to Sebeos, the Arabs reached Armenia through Mekk' just south of Lake Van around 641 (the first year of the incumbency of Chalcedonian Catholicos Nersēs III Šinoł, 641–661) and defeated the "lord of Rštunik" the "patrik" or head of naxarars Theodoros Rštuni at Gogowit.²⁹ He was captured and then released. In 643–644 the Arabs organized another offensive in two directions from Atrpatakan east of Lake Urmia, and pushed into Ayrarat, Aḫuank' (northeast of Lake Van), and Turuberan in its northwest.³⁰ In the same year, Theodoros had a brief victory. The Arabs moved forward and made a failed attempt toward Constantinople.³¹

Between the first major raids of 639 and 652–654, in 647/8 Emperor Constans II (641–668) tried to recover some of the imperial territories with the assistance of his allies in Armenia, but failed. As of this operation, Armenia became a stage for Arab–Byzantine conflict. The Arab side maintained its military superiority for the next two centuries. In turn, the Byzantines sustained their defenses and

tried to exert pressure over the Christians east of the Borderlands through the Chalcedonian dispute and demands for church union. In 647/8 Constans II issued his *Typos* to unite the churches and to end Christological disputes.³²

Eventually, all these attempts failed. The Church played a crucial role at this junction of Armenian history. Catholicos Nersēs III known as *Šinoł* (builder) was at the center of the events of the first two decades of Arab occupation and saw the rise of the Umayyads in Damascus. He initiated some of the most significant edifices of Armenian religious architecture at Xor Virap and Zuart'noc' (west of modern Erevan).³³ The historian Al-Muqaddasī visited Zuart'noc' and wrote:

Three leagues [about 12 kms., or 7.5 miles] from Dābil [Dvin] there is a white monastery [church] built from carved stone in the likeness of a tall hat It stood on eight pillars with doors between them, you could see the picture of Mary [that was in it] from every door you entered.³⁴

Under the banner of church union, Byzantine imperialism was active as of the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Religious disputes between the Diophysites and Monophysites reflected deep differences between the Hellenistic and Judaic cultural traditions. For the Diophysites the two complete natures of Christ fused miraculously in his person; for the Monophysites Christ's human nature was just an aspect of his divine nature. While the first was rooted in Greek dualism, the second reflected the eastern—Judaic, Syriac, and later on Muslim—"distrust of any representations of divinity." Essentially a "rural" church, as H. Kennedy puts it, the Monophysites—rather, the anti-Chalcedonians—used lay language and naturally appealed to the masses. When the Greeks wanted to reinforce ideological uniformity and initiated persecutions, the local tribes and Arabs in general supported these Christians against Byzantium.³⁵ Predictably, the Chalcedonian dispute became the dividing line between the allies and opponents of the Caliphate. A few years before the Byzantine invasion and the Emperor's *typos*, and in defiance of Byzantium, in 644–645 Armenians held a council at Dvin. It dealt with internal matters of the church and parishes.³⁶ A second council held in 649 rejected the proposal for church union presented by Emperor Constans II and Patriarch Paul of Constantinople.³⁷ Weary of Byzantine pressures, some of the Armenian nobles took the side of the Arabs, well aware that resistance to the Arabs could be perilous to all involved. The

Hellenophile *naxarars* presented a challenge to centralized power of any kind and the Arabs were always apprehensive. A pro-Arab front took shape, headed by Catholicos Nersēs III and Theodoros Țřtuni (Persian raised and Byzantine appointed governor of Armenia). The events that followed and the treatises that were signed and/or broken must be seen in this regional context.

Arab invasions and the rise of a new superpower posed the question of Islam as a new religious–political entity. Contemporary historians saw it their duty to explain the new conditions and Sebēos was the first. His “account of the rise of Islam is terse,” says Thomson, however, he adds, “presented in a series of compressed notices,” he gives “a great deal of precise information.”³⁸ Sebēos was also the first to speak of the founder of Islam, the Prophet Muḥammad, his early alliances with local tribes, and “warnings” to the Byzantines to evacuate. He wrote:

At that time [619-620] a certain man from among the sons of Ismaēl, whose name was Mahmēt, a merchant, as if by God’s command appeared to them as a preacher He taught them to recognize the God of Abraham, especially because he was informed in the history of Moses. Now because his command was from on high, at a single order they all came together in the unity of religion. Abandoning their vain cults, they turned to the living God who had appeared to their father Abraham. So Mahmēt legislated for them: not to eat carrion, not to drink wine, not to speak falsity, and not to engage in fornication. He said: “With an oath God promised this land to Abraham and his seed after him forever. And he brought about as he promised during that time while he loved Israel. But now you are the sons of Abraham, and God is accomplishing his promise to Abraham, and go and seize your land which God gave to your father Abraham. No one will be able to resist you in battle, because God is with you.”³⁹

In the manner and tradition of his Christian contemporaries in Syria, Sebēos too placed Islam in Biblical–apocalyptic context. He believed that Islam had already been foretold—negatively—in the prophecy of Daniel. The Greeks were the first beast in human form from the west, the Sassanians were the second in the form of a bear, the barbarous Gog and Magog were the third in leopard’s form, and Islam was the fourth beast arising from the south. The “kingdom of Ismaēl” was greater than all, and would consume the earth.⁴⁰ Soon, Islam was also defined in anti-heretical literature as a variant of the Arian heresy.

IV. Regulation of Islamic–Armenian Relations

A. The Treaty of Mu‘āwiyah (652)

Around the year 650, Caliph ‘Uthmān Ibn ‘Affān (644–656) was busy with internal disputes. The affairs of Syria and further north were almost totally under the control of the governor Mu‘āwiyah Ibn Abī Sufyān (602–680) from the Umayyads, a prominent clan of merchants in Mecca. A shrewd man with little spiritual scruples, according to some sources, he may have joined the circle of the Prophet’s assistants. Sebēos related that in 651/2, “having destroyed the throne of Persia”, the Arabs felt that they no longer needed to come to terms with the Greeks.⁴¹ Following another Arab raid in 652, left alone in the face of Byzantine threats, the governor of Armenia Prince Theodoros visited Damascus and a treaty was signed between him and Mu‘āwiyah (then the governor of Syria). Sebēos wrote about this visit and treaty:

Theodoros, Lord of Rštunik’, with all the Armenian princes made a pact with death and contracted an alliance with hell, abandoning the divine covenant. Now the prince of Ismaēl [Mu‘āwiyah] spoke with them and said: ‘Let this be the pact of my treaty between me and you for as many years as you may wish. I shall not take tribute for a three year period. Then you will pay [tribute] with an oath, as much as you may wish. You will keep in your country 15.000 cavalry, and provide sustenance from your country; and I shall reckon it in the royal tax. I shall not request the cavalry for Syria; but wherever else I command they shall be ready for duty. I shall not send amirs [*amirays*] to [your] fortresses, nor Arab army – neither many, nor even down to a single cavalryman. An enemy shall not enter Armenia; and if the Romans attack you I shall send troops in support, as you may wish. I swear by the great God that I shall not be false. ‘In this manner’, continues Sebēos, ‘the servant of the Anti-Christ [Muḥammad] split them [Armenians] away from the Romans [Byzantines].’⁴²

When in 653, Emperor Constans arrived in Karin/Erzerum at the head of a large army to revoke the treaty and gain the Armenians back, many naxarars met with him to devise a way to rid themselves of Theodoros.⁴³ But at the pleas of some, always according to Sebēos, even from Catholicos Nersēs III, the emperor refrained from further hostility and spent the winter at the catholicosal residence in Dwin. At the time, Siwnik’, Aḫuank’, and Iberia were in the camp of Theodoros, who was on the Island of Aḫt’amar (part of Rštunik’), with his son-in-law Hamazasp Mamikonean.⁴⁴ By military support from Mu‘āwiyah,

he drove away the Byzantines and again set out to Damascus, laden with presents. He was restored to his post and given authority over Armenia, Iberia, Aḡuank', and Siwnik'. Reminding the reader of the 652 Treaty, Sebēos says, "he made a pact with Mu'āwiyah to bring the land [entrusted to him] into subjection."⁴⁵ In 653–654, because of illness and other mostly ambiguous reasons, Theodoros withdrew (to Damascus, or his estate, or Constantinople, and died in 656 or 659). The naxarars dispersed, so did central authority.⁴⁶ In 654, Byzantium appointed Muṣeḡ Mamikonean as governor over Armenia, in turn he had no choice but to submit to the Arabs, and the "entire country," lamented Sebēos, "submitted in unison."⁴⁷

B. The Treaty of Ḥabīb Ibn Maslamah (654)

By the terms of the 652 treaty, Armenians were subjects of the Caliphate and no collaboration was allowed with Byzantium, the enemy of the Caliphate. Under the circumstances and practically, the collaboration of the Hellenophile naxarars with Byzantium meant the breaking of the 652 Treaty and antagonizing the Islamic *Ummah* (larger community, nation). A massive campaign was ordered by Caliph Uthmān, and Mu'āwiyah in Syria sent Ḥabīb Ibn Maslamah al-Fihri to Armenia.⁴⁸ The objective was to eradicate Byzantine military presence and subjugate the Hellenophile nobles. Ibn Maslamah arrived in the winter of 654/33H, and crushed the rebellion with extreme brutality. The invasion was the biggest of the previous Arab raids. He entered Duin, a cosmopolitan yet mostly Armenian city and a second treaty was signed in 654. The following are the versions of al-Balādhurī and Samvēl Aneci, consecutively:

In the name of God the compassionate, the merciful: This is a treaty of Ḥabīb Ibn Maslamah with the Christians, Magians and Jews, including those present and absent. I have granted you safety for your lives, possessions, churches, places of worship, and city walls. Thus you are safe and we are bound to fulfill our covenant, so long as you fulfill yours and pay the poll tax [*jizyah*] and land tax [*kharāj*]. God is witness, and this is sufficient.⁴⁹

In the name of God the Compassionate and Merciful, by this writ I, Ḥabīb Ibn Maslamah granted to the Christians, Magians and the Jews of Dābil safety of persons, properties, temples, churches and city walls. We shall keep this treaty firmly, as long as you maintain your consent and promise to pay poll tax. God is witness and this is sufficient.⁵⁰

Sebēos makes no mention of the Treaty of Ibn Maslamah in 654, even though his history ends at Mu'āwiyah's rise to the Umayyad throne in 661 as first Umayyad caliph.⁵¹ As discussed in detail later, in the tradition of the Prophet's Medinan oaths, the non-Muslims (this time strangely enough the "Magians" or Zoroastrians as well), had to pay tribute in return for their protection by the Muslims. In many ways the two treatises of 652 and 654 complimented each other and Armenians took them as a single compact with the Muslims. Indeed, these agreements allowed a high degree of religious freedom and peace in Armenia for a while. They also marked the beginning of a tradition of so-called "Prophet's Oath" to Armenians.

V. The Medinan Legacy as Paradigm for Islamic–Armenian Treatises

A. The 652 Treaty as a Link in the Tradition of Medinan Oath

Even viewed as common medieval protocols between conquerors and their subjects, the treatises of 652 and 654 taken as one, constitute one of the most familiar yet least investigated subjects in Islamic–Armenian history. Armenian medieval historians however placed them in the larger Islamic context when they saw its beginnings in an alleged "Oath by the Prophet" and traced all compacts, even those made after Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn, to this prophetic source.

The background of the 652/4 treaty should be studied in the tradition of the oaths (*'ahd*) to the non-Muslims or *dhimmīs*. This treaty is indeed rooted in the Prophet's policy toward the non-Muslims. It was formulated during the Medinan period (from his migration or *Hijrah* to this city in 622, to his death in 632), and is explicit in the Qur'ān as well. Various types of agreements in "Medinan" spirit were reached between Muslim rulers and their non-Muslim subjects, their echoes were found even in the Ottoman *Tanzimat* or reform projects of the nineteenth century.

As of the history of Sebēos, a literary tradition started in Armenia about agreements, also described as compacts, oaths, treaties, etc., with the Muslims. According to this tradition, Islamic–Armenian contacts allegedly began twenty years earlier, during the Medinan decade. The two treatises of 652 and 654 were therefore links in a series that was to continue and be referred to even at the beginning of the fifteenth century (by Grigor Tat'ewac'i).

Producing and sometimes rephrasing texts by *dhimmīs* was expected and happened everywhere. It is impossible to establish the

authenticity of texts circulating from the seventh century to the modern era. But from the earliest periods of Islam a tradition began in Christian literature—not just Armenian—and somehow gained a peculiar historicity. In fact, some Muslim rulers adopted and implemented its basic terms, whenever beneficial to them. Since it was the Christians who needed protection, they seem to have produced and circulated texts to legitimize their demands as per the commitment of the Prophet to safeguard the rights of the dhimmī communities. Each text in circulation claimed to be based on the previous one/s and became a link in a continuum. This process rightly acquired a historicity of its own as an aspect of Islamic–Armenian relations throughout. More importantly, with the exception of the 652 treaty, in most of the negotiations and agreements it was the Armenian Church that represented the Armenians. This is an extremely significant aspect of Islamic–Armenian relations.

Some scholars of the period prefer to set aside the whole subject of oaths pending the discovery of authentic texts. I suggest that in view of the significance of the tradition of oaths and circulating texts for Muslim–Christian relations, the issue of strict authenticity is secondary to the historicity of the tradition of so-called Islamic Oaths to Christians in medieval histories. What we have at hand is a so far barely studied or even noticed tradition of oaths in which the two sides—or at least the Christian side—stated the terms of coexistence with the ruling Muslims as per their own religious ethics. Concerning the concept of oaths/covenants in Islam, Humphreys says:

The Qurʾān puts great emphasis on the covenant between man and God (a concept expressed by the words *ʾahd* or *mīthāq*). This covenant consists of God's promise of salvation in return for man's full acceptance of the obligation to obey His commandments and to worship Him alone. This promise-and-obligation has existed since the very creation of man and is binding on every person, as expressed in the following verse (vii, 172): "Your Lord brought forth descendants from the loins of Adam's children and made them testify against themselves. He said, 'Am I not your Lord?' They replied, 'We bear witness that you are.' This He did, lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, 'We had no knowledge of that,' or, 'Our forefathers were indeed idolaters, but will you destroy us, their descendants, on account of what the followers of falsehood did?'"⁵²

Obviously there is a Qurʾānic paradigm of prophetic challenge which is the background of all subsequent terms of the Pax Islamica.⁵³

The betrayal of the Muḥammadan covenant and the nature of that betrayal are also and particularly part and parcel of this paradigm.⁵⁴ In Islam the religious and political are not sharply distinguished. The same can be said about Byzantium. As Meyendorff observes, Byzantium “did not want to distinguish between the universality of the Gospel and the imperial universality of Christian Rome.”⁵⁵

B. The Alleged “Prophet’s Oath to the Armenians,” and the Jerusalem Connection

In Armenian histories the earliest context and occasion of Islamic-Armenian contacts was the status of the Armenians and Eastern Christians of Jerusalem. What is known in Armenian histories as the “Prophet’s Oath” was considered an actual oath allegedly granted to a Christian deputation from Jerusalem in Medinah, headed by the Armenian Patriarch, during early 630s, if not earlier.

According to the Armenian tradition of oaths, this legend marks the first phase of interactions with Islam. In line with the tradition of the Prophet and in the same spirit, a similar arrangement was said to have been made by ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib in 626/4H (future caliph in 656–661 and Prophet), and a little later by Caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (634–644). The core of these initial “oaths” was tolerance toward and protection of Christian communities by their Muslim rulers in return to their absolute submission and payment of taxes. In line with this tradition, the treatises of Mu‘āwiyah and Ibn Maslamah were “reconfirmations” of the so-called “Prophet’s Oath.” This is how Armenians viewed their relations with the Islamic Caliphate at the time. In their opinion, the Umayyads simply “renewed”—as it was often said—the “Prophet’s Oath” in 703 and 719. Much later, in 1187 when Ayyūbid Salāḥ ed-Dīn entered Jerusalem, the Armenians saw another “renewal” of the initial oath to Armenians for protection in return for their subjection and tribute. In fact, Salāḥ ed-Dīn himself established this in his oath, which is accepted to be authentic. Armenians were said to have shown Salāḥ ed-Dīn the oaths of ‘Alī and ‘Umar. This oath will be cited and discussed in Volume Two. It does indeed support the Armenian tradition of tracing all oaths as continuations of what they called the Prophet’s Oath.

In the history of Leon Arpee there is a highly dubious yet intriguing mention concerning these oaths.⁵⁶ According to him, around the year 1605 the Safavid Shāh Abbās made a Medinan-style commitment to the Armenians, whom he had uprooted from the Julfa area in southeast

historic Armenia and forcibly settled in New Julfa-Isfahan. Arpee says that the agreement was ratified by a copy of an old Medinan oath allegedly given to the Syrian Christians. He also cites this initial document in his translation into English. No documents that he refers to are found in the archives of the Armenian Bishopric of New Julfa. But the history of New Julfa in an Islamic state somehow proves this extravagant hypothesis. As mentioned, over 250 years later, and despite great differences in circumstances, the two rescripts of the Ottoman Tanzimat or reforms (1839, 1856) were not more than modernized versions of the early Islamic or Medinan system of regulating the status of non-Muslim or dhimmī subjects. At present, in many Muslim countries the status of the Christian minorities is not very different from this early Islamic tradition, surely with clear improvements on the civil rights level.

As indicated earlier, it can be argued that irrespective of their authenticity—which cannot be established anyway—in medieval Armenian histories the tradition of oaths should be studied as a single broad aspect of Islamic–Armenian interactions. They reflect the terms in which Armenians envisaged their rights, duties, and expectations in Muslim states.

Notes

1. In 1639 a deeper and almost permanent division happened by the Treaty of Zuhab between Safavid Iran and Ottoman Turkey. The former took Eastern Armenia, the latter Western Armenia or most of historic Armenia. Historic Western Armenia had become part of the Ottoman Empire and is part of Turkey, and the Republic of Armenia (1991) occupies only a small part of the historic land left in the east.
2. See Alexander Xaç'atrecan, *Dīwān al-Nuqūsh al-'Arabiyyah fī Armīnyah* [Record of the Arabic Inscriptions in Armenia—Eighth–Sixteenth Centuries], 2 vols., trans. Shawkat Yūsuf, vol. I (Damascus: Dār Salām l'il-Tarjamah wa'l-Nashr, 1987).
3. Ibid., 7–8.
4. Ibid., 55. For the village of Orotn, see Inscriptions 58–80, 103–12.
5. A. Mnac'akanecan, *Haykakan Miḡnadarean Žoṭovrdakan Erger* [Medieval Armenian Popular Songs] (Erevan: Haykakan SSR GA Publications, 1956), 182.
6. Ibid., 183–205.
7. Leo, *Erkeri Joṭovacu* [Collected Works], 10 vols. (Erevan: Hayastan Publications, 1966–1987; vol. II, 1967), 469.
8. See B. Xalat'ean, “Arabac'i Matenagrerc Hayastani masin [Arab Authors on Armenia—Excerpts from al-Balādhurī, al-Ṭabarī. Ibn al-Athīr, Yaqūbī],” *Handēs Amsoreay* (January 1903): 176–80; (August 1903): 252–56; May (1905): 159–60; (August 1905): 244–45; (September 1906): 273–77;

- (February 1907): 60–61; (May 1907): 140–41; H. O. Adamean, trans., “Yaqūbī Arab Patmagirē ew Hayerē [Yaqūbī the Arab Historian and the Armenians],” in four parts, *Bazmavēb* (July/August 1957), (March–May 1958); H. T. Nalpantean, trans., *Arabakan Alburnerē Hayastani ew Harewan Erkrneri masin: Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Abū'l-Fidā', Ibn Shaddād* [Arab Sources about Armenia and Neighboring Countries: Yaqūt al-Ḥamawī, Abū'l-Fidā', Ibn Shaddād] (Erevan: Haykakan SSR GA, 1965).
9. Sebēos, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebēos*, trans. R. Thomson, J. H. Johnston, and T. Greenwood (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999); Lewond, *History of Lewond*, trans. and comm. Z. Arzumanyan, 2nd ed. (Burbank, CA: Council of Religious Education of the Armenian Church of North America, 2007); T'ovma Arcruni, *Thomas Artsruni Patmut'iwn Tann Artsruniats* [History of the House of Arcrunis], trans. comm. Robert W. Thomson (Detroit, MI: Wayne University Press, 1985).
 10. Aram Tēr-Lewondean, trans. and ed., *Arabakan Albiwurner: Ibn al-Athīr, Liakatar Patmut'iwn* [Arab Sources: Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī'l-Ta'rikh*] (Erevan: Haykakan SSR GA, 1981). According to Tēr-Lewondean, *Baṭṭiq* was a term used for all Christian princes, feudal nobility, or *naxarars*, even the Prince of Princes of *Armīnyah* in the ninth century, 365.
 11. See C. J. F. Dowsett, trans., *The History of the Caucasian Albanians by Movsēs Dasxuranc'i* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).
 12. See Step'anos Ōrbelean, *Žamanakagrut'iwn* [Chronicle], ed. A. Abrahamian (Erevan, 1942); *Patmut'iwn Sisakan Nahangin* [History of the Province of Sisakan] (Tbilisi: N. Aghanian Press, 1911). The French translation: Step'anos Orbelean, *Histoire de la Siounie*, trans. M. Brosset (Saint Petersburg: Academie Imperiale des Sciences, 1864–1866).
 13. Al-Wāqiti, *Geschichte der Eroberung der Mesopotamien und Armenien*, ed. Niebuhr (Hamburg, 1847).
 14. See note 7.
 15. Ibid.
 16. A summary of *Kitāb Akhbār al-Zamān* in thirty volumes is lost, but a selection is made called *Kitāb al-Awsāṭ*. See Mac'oudi, *Les prairies d'or* [Golden Meadows] I-IX, text, trans. C. B. de Meynard (1861–1877). Also see, *Le livre de l'avertissement et de la revision* [*Kitāb al-Tanbih wa'l-Ishrāf*], Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum VIII, trans. B. Carra de Vaux (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1896).
 17. Ibn al-Azraq al-Fāriqī, *Ta'rikh al-Fāriqī*, Beirut, Lebanon, Dār al-Fikr al-Ḥadīth, 1988.
 18. Ibn al-Athīr, 'Izz ed-dīn Abū'l- Ḥusn 'Alī Ibn Abī'l-Karam Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Karīm Ibn 'Abd al-Wahīd al-Shaybānī, *Al-Kāmil fī'l-Ta'rikh*, 13 vols. (Beirut: Dar Ṣādir, 1979). The Armenian excerpts: Aram Tēr Lewondean, trans. *Arabakan Albiwurnerē Hayastani ew Harewan Erkrneri masin - II: Ibn al-Athīr* [Arab Sources on Armenian and Neighboring Countries-II: Ibn al-Athīr] (Erevan: Haykakan SSR GA Publications, 1981).
 19. Bar Hebraeus (Grighōr Abū'l-Faraj), trans. E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Chronography of Bar Hebraeus [being the first part of his Political History of the World]*, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1932); Gregory Abu'l-Faraj, the son of Aaron, the Hebrew physician commonly

- known as Dionysius of Tall Mahre, *Chronique the Denys de Tell Mahré*, quatrième partie, ed. J. -B. Chabot (Paris: É. Bouillon, 1895); Michael the Syrian, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, 4 vols., ed. and trans. J. -B. Chabot (Paris: Culture a Civilisation, 1899).
20. Melkisēt'-Bēk, *Vrac' Aṭbiwrnerē Hayastani ew Hayeri masin* [Georgian Sources on Armenia and Armenians] (Erevan, 1934–1955).
21. D. M. Lang, *Armenia Cradle of Civilization* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1980), 175.
22. Nina Garsoïan, "The Arab Invasions and the Rise of the Bagratuni (640–884)," *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, ed. R. G. Hovannisian, 2 vols. vol. I (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 117–42, 141.
23. *Sebēos, The Armenian History Attributed to Sebēos*, ed. and trans. Robert W. Thomson, 2 parts, Part II (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 233–34. The English translation: Sebēos, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebēos*, trans. R. Thomson, J. H. Johnston, and T. Greenwood (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999).
24. Thomson, "The Formation of the Armenian Literary Tradition," in *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period*, ed. N. G. Garsoïan, T. F. Mathews, and R. W. Thomson (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982), 135–50, 136.
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37. Manuēl Jinbashian, *Church-State Relations in Armenia during the Arab Domination* (Lisbon: C. Gulbenkian Foundation, 2000), 64–69.
38. Thomson, *Armenian History*, Part II, 233.
39. Sebēos, *Armenian History*, Part I, 96. Henceforth, Sebēos, *History*.
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42. Ibid., 136. In *Grabar* (Classical Armenian): “Ays lici uxt haštutean imoy ěnd is ew jez orč’ap’ amac’ duk’ kamic’ik’, ew oc’ ařnum i jenj sak zerkeam mi, apa yařzam tajik’ erdmamb orč’ap’ ew duk’ kamijik’. Ew heceal kalěk’ 15 hazar, ew hayoc’ yařxarhěn tuk’ ew es i sakn ark’uni angayem ew zhecealsn yAsoris oč’ xndrem bayc’ aylur ew hramayem batrast lic’ěn i gorc. Ew oč’ arjakem i berdorayn amirays ew oč’ tačik apay i bazmac’ minč’ew c’mi heceal: T’šnami mi mtc’ě i hays, ew et’ě gay Hořomn i veray jer, arjakem jez zawrs yawgnakanut’iewn orč’ap’ ě duk’ kamic’ik’. Ew erdnum i mecs Astuac yet’ě oč’ stem.”
43. Ibid., 137.
44. Ibid., 138–39.
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47. Seběos, *History*, 149.
48. Al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb Futūh al-Buldān* [Book of Conquest of Countries], M. J. de Goeje, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1863–1866), 197.
49. Ibid., 200; Al-Balādhurī, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, trans. Ph. Hitti, 2 vols. (New York: AMS, 1968–1969), vol. II, 314–15.
50. Leo, *Collected Works*, vol. II, 309. In the translation of Leo: “Yanun As-tucoy gtacin ew ořormacin, ays ě girn or Habib ordi Maslamayi šnorhec’ Děbili k’ristoninerin, mogerin ew hreanerin. Jer anjeri, inc’k’i, ekeřec’ineri, tačarneri ew k’alak’i parispreri apahovutiewně jez šnorhec’i ew duk’ apa-howuac’ ěk’, ew menk’ ays dařnakc’utiewně hastat piti pahenk’ k’ani or duk’ hačutiewn yaytnec’ik’ ew xostac’ak’ glhahark ew kaluacaturk’ včarel. Astuac vkay ě ew ir vkayutiewně bawakan ě.
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52. R. Stephen Humphreys, “Qur’anic Myth and Narrative Structure in Early Islamic Historiography,” in *Tradition and Innovation in Late Antiquity*, ed. F. M. Clove and R. S. Humphreys (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 276–77.
53. Ibid., 278.
54. Ibid.
55. John Meyendorff, “Byzantine Views of Islam,” in *Arab Byzantine Relations in Early Islamic Times*, ed. Michael Bonner (Great Britain: Ashgate Varorium, 2004), 217–34, 231.
56. Leon Arpee, *A History of Armenian Christianity* (New York: The Armenian Missionary Association of America, 1946), 356–60. Arpee is the translator of this alleged letter and claims to have taken it from Yarut’iwn T. Těr Yovhaneanc’, *Patmut’iwn Nor řulayi ař yAsbahan* [History of New Julfa at Isfahan], 2 vols. (New Julfa: Amenap’rkč’ěan Surb Vanac’ Press, 1880–1881). No such document exists in this book, and no record exists of any such document in the archives of the Prelacy of New Julfa.

The Umayyad Period and the Reconfirmation of Oaths

When Caliph ‘Uthmān was assassinated in 656/35H, the institution of Rashīdūn (or “rightfully guided”) Caliphate (632–661, the first four “successors” of Muḥammad, or the “caliphs”, Arabic *khalīfah*) began showing signs of disintegration. Already before the rise of the Umayyads in 661/40, the position of ‘Alī, Muḥammad’s son in law, was controversial. Even though he saw himself as the rightful heir, many did not accept his claims. He had a circle of sympathizers called his “party” or “*al-shī‘ah*,” who even “attributed to him supernatural powers and enlightenment.”¹

As per the old Arabian tradition, Caliph ‘Alī (656–661) was urged to avenge the death of his predecessor Caliph ‘Uthmān. Not a political-minded figure, ‘Alī saw the role of the caliph as a purely religious one and did not approve of violence anyway. He was, as he insisted, the *imām* or the spiritual leader of the faithful and not a tyrannical tax-collector and guardian of vested interests. He was indeed a valiant and charismatic figure.² When he failed to reach a compromise with the dissatisfied and rebellious factions, conflict with ‘Uthmān’s avengers became inevitable. The first conflict happened between the latter and governor Mu‘āwiyah’s Syrian followers at Ṣiffīn near Raqqah in central Syria in the spring of 657/37H. Mu‘āwiyah was a cunning man. He made no loud claims but from the beginning the caliphate was his objective. After a brief conflict the next year, an agreement was reached with ‘Alī by arbitration and the two men were treated on equal footing.³

When ‘Alī, then based in Baṣrah, accepted arbitration, some of his followers objected and split, they came to be called *Khawārij* or Khārijites (seceders). The latter believed that only the most pious must be caliph, regardless of descent or race. They even elected a caliph of their own and established their own little bedouin land for the next

half century in north east Arabia. Eventually they were defeated by Alī's forces at the Battle of Nahrawān on July 17, 658/38H.⁴ On January 661, 'Alī was murdered in revenge at Kūfah by a Khārījite.⁵

I. The Early Decades

In 661/40H, Mu'āwiyah Ibn Abi Sufyān then in his fifties, became the first Umayyad Caliph and the strongest man in the Islamic world at that time. He ruled from Damascus not by military supremacy but by politics and agreements⁶ over an essentially decentralized kingdom. Each province, such as Armenia, continued its own cultural traditions and there was not even an Islamic coinage during this period.⁷ The Syrian Christians formed the great majority of the population of Syria, most spoke Aramaic and coexisted with the Arabic-speaking peoples since Roman times. The Umayyads were more tolerant toward the Christians and for a while had to rely on them in their administration. In Egypt the situation was more complicated. Muslim infiltration made the Copts, who were considered natives, uncomfortable and rebellious.⁸

There is an interesting case in Muslim-Christian relations in the year 651/31H, a year before Mu'āwiyah's Treaty with the Armenian governor that reinforces the argument in favor of the Medīnan background and context of medieval Islamic-Christian compacts. According to H. Kennedy, the peace treaty that Caliph 'Uthmān signed with Christian Nubia (on the Nile, north of the Sudan and south of Egypt) was something of a puzzle for Muslim Jurists. The Nubians were "to live at peace with their Muslim neighbors and obtain food from them on several conditions, notably that they paid a tribute of slaves." This treaty remained in force throughout the early Islamic period. Nubia was clearly part of *Dār al-Ḥarb* (House of War), as opposed to *Dār al-Islām* (House of Islam). Consequently, Muslims could not sign a lasting peace treaty with non-Muslim peoples on enemy or "war zone" (*Dār al-Ḥarb*). The Nubian agreement was unknown elsewhere on the Borderlands.⁹ The Treatises of Mu'āwiyah and Ibn Maslamah can also be studied in this light. They were said to have been "reconfirmed" twice and lasted to the end of the Umayyads in 750/133H.

Mu'āwiyah died in 680/61H and the question of succession came to the forefront again. Three caliphs rose to the throne to the year 685/66H. In Kūfah, Wāsiṭ, and Baṣrah, the Muslims felt that they lived under alien Syrian rule. The people of Kūfah invited Ḥusayn, the second son of 'Alī, who lived in Medīnah. Despite warnings, this grandson of the Prophet (his mother was Fāṭimah, the Prophet's

daughter) took up a journey to fight for the hereditary rights of the "Family of the Prophet" (*Ahl al-Bayt*). On October 10, 680/Muḥarram 10, 61 H at Karbalā', west of the Euphrates on the edge of the Syrian desert, he was ambushed and fell after a brief battle. The martyrdom of Ḥusayn caused the eventual division of Muslims into Sunnīs and Shī'īs.¹⁰ In 685/66H Caliph 'Abd al-Malik rose to the Umayyad throne and launched a program of Arabization and Islamization. During his twenty-year term, in Syria in particular, Arabic became the official language in Syria and all Christian and Zoroastrian symbols and images were replaced by Arabic-Islamic ones.

During the civil wars of the 680s, plagues and severe climate occupied the Caliphate and the Greeks recovered some of their previously held territories in Asia Minor. They even defeated the Arab armies before the walls of Constantinople. Emperor Constantine IV (668–685) arrived in the region but chose to return after imposing a huge tribute on 'Abd al-Mālik. In 689 Justinian II of Byzantium (685–695) signed a ten-year treaty with the Umayyads. As a gesture of good will, the emperor also removed about twelve thousand Mardaite (a seventh-century militant Christian sect settled in the northern mountains of Lebanon), who were troubling the Caliphate since 669.¹¹ Retaliations against the Christians intensified and their condition in the Caliphate deteriorated. Justinian II broke the Treaty and fresh Arab raids drove him back. Arab garrisons were sent to Armenia thus contradicting the terms of the Treaty of Mu'āwiyah.¹²

Despite some conflict, until 690s Armenia remained an autonomous tributary of the Caliphate. There is no evidence of large-scale religious persecutions. Two well-known Christian "martyrs," David of Dwin and Vahan of Gołt'n, were Muslim converts, hence their punishment as renegades.¹³ In this respect, the phenomenon of Muslim conversions to Christianity is not a well-researched aspect of Near Eastern history. The chroniclers are primarily Christian historians, and their motives are obvious. On the other hand, severe punishment by death was a deterrent. There are however, political conversions among Arab tribal amīrs who during the eighth century and later converted and married ladies of the Armenian nobility in order to acquire rights of inheritance.

II. Change of Status in 692–693/73H

Around 692–693/73H the situation took a sudden turn for the worse in Armenia. The appointment of caliph 'Abd al-Malik's brother

Muḥammad Ibn Marwān as governor of al-Jazīrah practically meant the end of autonomy. Armenian historians, including myself for a while, have taken the year 701 as the beginning of what is called “direct” Arab rule. At the time Smbat Bagratuni, the prince/governor of Armenia, who succeeded Nerseh Kamsarakan, had a nominal position, and anyway, the Arab side considered the naxarars a threat to the Caliphate. Muḥammad Ibn Marwān was given the task of eliminating them altogether. This figure is also very important for the clarification of one of the obscure points in medieval Armenian history. Muḥammad Ibn Marwān is in fact the mysterious *Mahmūd* mentioned by prominent scholar and theologian in Siwnik’, Grigor Tat’ewac’i (d. 1411) in his *Treatise Against the Tajiks* (written during late 1390s; as discussed in detail in Volume Three). After the Prophet’s “Great *Manšūr*” (decree), related Tat’ewac’i, Mahmūd who had led campaigns into the region of Lake Sewan too in the north west, signed a “Little *Manšūr*” with the Armenians, promising them freedom of faith. It seems that the hitherto unknown author of this second pact or the “Little *Manšūr*” was in fact Muḥammad Ibn Marwān.

In short, Armenian internal sovereignty ended not in 701 but in 693, when Muḥammad Ibn Marwān became the first ostikan of Armīnyah. This official was also called *‘āmil* (commissioner), *amīr* (prince), *wālī* (governor), and/or *Šāḥib* (lord). He resided in Dwin, later on, as of 789, the Arab governors resided in Bartaw or Barda’ah. Prince (*išxan*) Smbat Bagratuni the governor of Armenia was under his authority. In the eyes of the Greeks (who at the time were involved in Bulgar wars) *Armīnyah* was now enemy territory, and a raid to recover it in 698 failed. By the end of the century, Armenia was lost for them but the pro-Byzantine politics of a good number of nobles continued with force. The majority of soldiers in Byzantine armies were Armenians. The troops stationed in the theme of Armeniakon on the eastern borders were identified as “Armeniaks”. Many rose to very high ranks and a few to the imperial throne of Byzantium.¹⁴

After large-scale operations into Lake Sewan in northeast Armenia, Ibn Marwān appointed a certain Abū Shaykh Ibn ‘Abdallāh as governor of Armenia, and returned to Damascus around 700, laden with booties. His successor pursued the same violent policies¹⁵ and caused a rebellion in 703.¹⁶ Ibn al-Athīr has the following about these circumstances:

In the year 82 of Hijrah [701-2] Muḥammad Ibn Marwān invaded Armenia. Upon the request of the Armenians he signed a peace

treaty [*ṣulḥ*] with them and appointed Abū Shaykh Abdallāh [as governor]. However, they [Armenians] broke the agreement and killed the latter a year later.¹⁷

III. Muḥammad Ibn Marwān, the Rebellion of 703 and the Reconfirmation—The “Little Manšūr”

Obviously there was a peace treaty in 701–702, which seems to have remained on paper. The troubles referred to by Ibn al-Athīr were in fact Mamikonean uprisings in 703 in reaction to Abdallāh's oppressions. Previously in 682–683/63H a first wave was led by Grigor Mamikonean. The Arabs were defeated at Vardanakert and there were lesser rebellions in other locations. Using these events as pretext, the Arabs who were anyway suspicious of the naxarars, gathered them in the churches of Naxijewan and Xram and set the buildings on fire. Governor Smbat and Catholicos Sahak were driven to Damascus among other prisoners.

In many ways, the treaty of 703 was seen as a reconfirmation of the previous one made less than two years earlier. The “Little Manšūr” was made in dramatic circumstances under Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Malik (685–705), between Muḥammad Ibn Marwān and posthumously Catholicos Sahak III Jorap’orec’i (677–703) at Ḥarrān near Damascus. Following the 703 uprising, when events took a tragic turn in Armenia, the ailing Catholicos Sahak, who was held as a prisoner in Damascus, was asked by whoever was left of the naxarars to mediate with the caliph. He managed to negotiate in the capital and was allowed to leave Damascus for Ḥarrān, where he presented a plea to Muḥammad Ibn Marwān.¹⁸ But while in Ḥarrān he fell seriously ill. On his deathbed he wrote a letter addressed to the caliph, which the chronicler Lewond cited as follows:

I was sent before you by my people to tell you my deliberations which the naxarars and řamiks [common people] of Armenia united solicit of you. But he who is the Supreme Master of life, carried me away near him, and I was not able to meet you or speak with you. Now however, I make you swear by the living God and I lay upon you this treaty, the covenant of God, which was with Ismaēl your father, how He promised to give him the whole world unto bondage and subjugation, in order that you shall make peace with my people, and shall serve you by paying tribute. Hold your sword back from blood and your hand from pillage, and they will obey you with all their heart. But upon the subject of our faith, I ask that we may be

free to keep what we believed and confessed, and let no one of you torture us to force us to change our faith.¹⁹

By his wish, his body was carried to Damascus with the letter in his hand. This posthumous embassy and the signing of a new treaty between the Armenians and the Caliphate is related by Drasxanakertc'i. He says,

.... having taken the letter from his hand and read it, he [the caliph] said, 'Yes, your request is fulfilled, you honorable man of God.' And he wrote a letter to the naxarars of Armenia and together with the body of the holy pontiff, sent it to Armenia with great honors.²⁰

According to Lewond the condition of the Church and clergy improved, and for a while there were no reports of compulsory conversions. Seven centuries later Grigor Tat'ewac'i summarized the terms of this treaty quoting Kirakos Ganjakec'i almost verbatim (without mentioning his source):

Mahmēd [the Prophet] had signed and sealed a permanent Oath to the Armenians known as the *Mec Manšur* [Great Decree] to freely hold their Christianity.... and imposed a tax on each house consisting of four *dirhams*, three *marzans* of barley, one rope [of hair] and one towel. The clergy, the nobility and cavalry were exempted of this tax. Another *Mahmēd*, who was said to have occupied Lake Sewan and its island, issued another *manšur*, known as the *Pok'r Manšur* [Little Decree]. It reconfirmed the Great Manšur by allowing the Armenians to follow their faith freely, pay the fixed taxes, with the exemption of the clergy, nobility and the cavalry.²¹

When Tat'ewac'i was writing these lines, Mongol persecutions and forced and voluntary conversions had reached unprecedented levels. He was trying to remind his adversaries as well as the Armenians of the alleged Oath of the Prophet renewed by the Umayyads in 703. He almost demanded a recognition and reconfirmation of the oath; he was also placing these treatises in the single context of Islamic–Armenian protocols rooted in the Medīnan legacy.

IV. Continuation of the Legacy: The “Covenant” of Caliph 'Umar II to Catholicos Ōjnec'i

Caliph 'Abd al-Malik died in 705/86H, leaving a bureaucratic empire dependent primarily on an army of Syrians. He also left a divided people, and many Muslims did not believe that he “represented their

wishes or needs.”²² In 705/86H Emperor Justinian II (705–711) recovered his throne and ‘Abd al-Malik’s son al-Walid rose to the Umayyad throne (705/86–715/96). The empire expanded, Spain was invaded in 711 and conquered in 716, then Samarqand in 711–712.²³ The main objective of the Caliphate, outwardly at least, was to maintain the *jihād* or holy war. The next caliph Sulaymān died within the year of his succession while on his way to the Arab–Byzantine borders.

Al-Walid (*Vlit’* in Armenian sources) was probably the most zealous of the Umayyad caliphs. According to Arab sources, he appropriated the Church of St. John in Damascus to enlarge the adjacent Umayyad Mosque. He ordered to transport the gilded brass cupola of the Church of Ba‘albeck (in Lebanon) to decorate the dome of the mosque his father built in Jerusalem. To sustain his construction projects he raised the taxes, and subsequently caused the dissent and revolt of the *naxarars* in Armenia.²⁴ By the Medinan legacy, the Church and clergy were held in special respect. The election of Catholicos Elia I Arjišec’i (703–717), an anti-Byzantine and pro-Arab figure reflected the times in Armenia. As far as the Caliphate was concerned, Chalcedonianism was the equivalent of enmity to Muslims and an alliance with their enemy Chalcedonian Byzantium. All choices in this respect led to the politicization of doctrinal matters in Armenia. Catholicos Elia I presided over a Synod at Partaw and issued punishments to the Chalcedonians.

Gradually, the Umayyads relieved some of their religious pressures and in 709 the new *ostikan* allowed Smbat Bagratuni to resume office and rebuild Duin.²⁵ On the Byzantine front, Umayyad armies reached Constantinople in 716–717, but were driven back by Emperor Leo III the Isaurian (717–740/1). According to Samvėl Anec’i, Armenians paid a tax of four silver dirhams on each household, converts to Islam were exempted, but still paid the *kharāj* or the land-tax. In general, conditions of the Christians in Armenia were relatively better than the condition of those in al-Shām in the south.

The pro-Arab policies of the Church during the eighth century gave this institution greater temporal authority. Catholicos Yovhan III Ōj nec’i known as *Imastasēr* or philosopher (incumbency 717–728), worked in truly exceptional circumstances and had remarkable achievements. Caliph ‘Umar II Ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz (717/99H–720/101H), his contemporary, was a most intriguing character. While his predecessors were secular and ruthless figures, he was a pious Muslim who ruled like a true caliph and a worthy successor of the Prophet.

“It was his sense of self-righteousness as against the transgressions of his predecessors which made him respect the rights of the Christians, in the sense of the Qur’ānic prescriptions,” says Spuler. Indeed, none of his successors followed his path.²⁶

Beyond partisan and tribal concerns, ‘Umar II is said to have wanted to break down the barriers between the Muslim rulers and their non-Muslim subjects. He was the first Umayyad to see the Caliphate in theocratic terms and took much pride in being a descendant of Caliph ‘Umar I (634–644) through his mother’s family. He set on to reevaluate problems from the perspective of the Rāshidūn caliph ‘Umar. According to Spuler,

.... he decreed that equal pay be given to clients who fought in wars for the faith and that converted peasants be henceforth exempt from the poll tax. Muslims apparently had still to pay the land tax because otherwise the tax-revenue would have been seriously impaired. It also appears that the collective liability for taxes was retained, and that the burden of the payments by Muslims fell onto the shoulders of their fellow-countrymen who remained Christians or Zoroastrians, etc.²⁷

In Damascus, ‘Umar II compensated the confiscation of the Church of St. John (by his predecessor), by giving the Church of St. Thomas in al-Ghūṭah to the Christians. He fixed the kharāj on everyone, thus equalizing all subjects. After his death the more discriminatory taxation policy was reinstated. He also forbade foreign wars and initiated a reform program and a new style of administration which however died with him.²⁸ Armenian historians like T’ovma Arcruni, Ganjakec’i, and Ľewond, speak very highly of Caliph ‘Umar II.

The figure most closely associated with Caliph ‘Umar II was Catholicos Yovhan Ōjnec’i. He came from the lesser nobility of Ōjun in the province of Tašir in the north. He knew Greek and some Arabic, and more importantly, he seems to have understood Islamic political culture. During his incumbency and due to regional circumstances and the absence of a central authority in Armenia, the role of the Catholicosate superseded that of the nobility. A very handsome man, he dressed as royalty, sprinkled his long gray beard with gold powder mixed with scented oils.

The Arabs were impressed. Caliph ‘Umar II wanted to meet the Catholicos at Damascus. The visit was made on 719 and turned into a semi-legendary story. Amazed at Yovhan’s elaborate attire and

coiffure, when the caliph reminded him of the humility of Christ, Yovhan showed him the shirt of coarse goat's hair that he wore on his skin, underneath the luxurious garments. The Caliph was reported to have said: "How is the body of a man able to endure with patience such intolerable sackcloth, unless patience is given to him by God."²⁹ Very much impressed by Ōjnec'i, when the caliph offered all types of assistance, the Catholicos reportedly asked three things: no compulsory conversions, exemption of the clergy of all taxation, and freedom of faith and worship. Ganjakec'i related:

Grant us these requests in writing [said the Catholicos] and all my people will serve you. 'And he ['Umar II] immediately commanded a letter to be written according to his demand. He sealed it with his ring, lavished upon him favors, convoked numerous troops under him and sent him with great honors to the land of Armenia. The Catholicos also insured the release of Armenian prisoners in Damascus as of 705.³⁰

What interests us in this episode is the reported "renewal" of the Medinan legacy another time in 719. Upon his return, Ōjnec'i had almost absolute control over the Church. As expected, he completely severed relations with Byzantium, drove away the Hellenophiles as well as heterodox factions to whom he referred to as Paulicians (I shall refer to this sect in detail later), who now benefited from Byzantine iconoclasm and moved to their side in the west. A remarkable figure in many ways, Ōjnec'i also brought a unique contribution to the stabilization of Armenian canon law. At the Council of Dwin in 719, he spoke of the necessity to unify the liturgy and eliminate irregularities even contradictions, as we see in the *Kanongirk' Hayoc'*.³¹ After liturgical normalization, the Catholicos moved to church union talks with the eastern churches. The Council of Manazkert in 726 (with Patriarch Athanasius, 724–740) was for the union of Armenian and Syrian Jacobite Churches. It also put into practice the ideas that he had elaborated in his theological works. Ōjnec'i thus caused a major turn in the history of Armenian theology, liturgy, and the Church.³²

A note is in order at this point about the role and status of the Armenian catholicoses, particularly during periods of power vacuum and crisis. After the seventh century, the catholicos very often represented Armenia before other states and powers, particularly the Muslims.³³ From the beginning, says J. P. Mahé, the Catholicosate remained the only "stable institution."³⁴

Caliph 'Umar II died in 720/101H, and his cousin Yazīd II Ibn 'Abd al-Malik succeeded him (to 724/105H). The latter was a weak and inept figure and most of what 'Umar II had accomplished was reversed. He ordered the destruction of all Christian images (a move that coincided with Byzantine iconoclasm) and ordered the new ostikan of Armenia, Ḥārith Ibn 'Amr al-Ṭā'i, to increase taxes.³⁵ Locally, Prince Smbat Bagratuni died in 725–6/174; Ašot Bagratuni was appointed by Marwān Ibn Muḥammad only in 732.

Caliph Hishām (724/105H–745/125H) was known for his sympathies toward the Christians. He resided in the mainly Christian town of Ruṣāfah near Raqqah on the edge of the Syrian desert. His governor over Iraq—part Christian on his mother's side—was tolerant toward all non-Muslims.³⁶ Financial difficulties and foreign invasions (of Turks and Khazars) occupied Hishām.

Marwān Ibn Muḥammad, future caliph and a grandson of caliph Marwān led the Umayyad armies in Armenia. He recruited the natives and generally was in good terms with the naxarars. He supported his own protégé, Ašot Bagratuni and alienated the Mamikoneans, the latter's rivals and enemies. In 739/121H he managed to drive the Khazars into the lower Volga.³⁷ Earlier on, in 737, Marwān had subjugated the Turkic nomads.

The Umayyads were the heirs of Byzantine and Sassanian traditions and civilizations, in addition to those of Syrian Monophysites and Babylonian Jews.³⁸ The Dome of the Rock and the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus were built by Byzantine architectural techniques, as were the palaces.³⁹ They could never manage the economies of their empire and were constantly faced with problems. Having little concern about religious matters, they also failed to offer the Muslims the kind of leadership they were expected to as a Caliphate.⁴⁰ However, they were tolerant toward non-Muslims and did not initiate large-scale persecutions. The non-Muslims accepted their status as "subject peoples with comparative equanimity."⁴¹ It was during their reign that Arabic became the lingua franca in most parts of Syria.

In 749, a rebellion led by Abū Muslim in Khurasān drove the Umayyads out of that province and reached the Tigris. Abu Muslim (known as 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Muslim Khurasānī, probably a Persian native of Isfahan) was a supporter of Abu'l-'Abbās al-Saffāh, future first 'Abbāsīd caliph, and led an organized movement against the Umayyads. In 750/132H, Abu Muslim led the pro-'Abbāsīd army

against the Umayyads at Battle of the Zāb and stormed Damascus, the Umayyad capital later that year.

The 'Abbasid Caliphate was established by brothers Abū'l-'Abbās and Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr. Despite their great number, the Alids or the Shī'is in Iraq were driven out, the Sunnī 'Abbāsīd Caliphate was established and survived until 1258. However, for the most part the 'Abbāsids did not get involved in theological disputes in favor of Sunnism. Some of them were Shī'ī sympathizers, but for purely political considerations they stood against the Shī'is, Khārijīs, Qarāmiṭah, Ismā'īlis, and other trends. They also disliked radical Sunnī schools, such as Ḥanbalism. Yet, Sunnī Muslims regarded the 'Abbāsids as "theirs" and for a long time to come, religion and politics were indistinguishable, at least as far as the structure of the state was concerned. In other words, in the tradition of the Sassanians, religion was the public face of the state as well as the core of its legitimacy.⁴²

V. The Later Umayyad Period in Armenia: Dissidence and Heterodoxy as Paradigms of Interaction

As mentioned, under the Arabs the entire Armenian habitat was unified and the culture of Marzpanic Armenia continued to early eighth century. Construction, urban life, and trade were not seriously affected and the seventh century became the golden age of Armenian religious architecture. The great churches of Ejmiacin, Zuart'noc', Hrip'simē, Aragacotn, Vałaršapat, Öjun, and Sisian were constructed at this time. The Kamsarakans and Mamikoneans built palatine churches on their own estates at T'alın, Aruč, and elsewhere.⁴³

Already before the demise of the Umayyads in 750, while the incoming Arab tribes were establishing their emirates (or principalities), the entire Western Euphrates, Fourth Armīnyah, Pok'r Hayk', and Cilicia were battlefields for Byzantine–Arab wars. As taxes were raised and religious persecutions accelerated, Hellenophile Armenian nobility began to disperse and migrate. On another level, the introduction of the Muslim element into eastern Asia Minor contributed to the proliferation of heterodox trends.

Indeed, it was during the early decades of the eighth century that the problem of Armenian heterodox factions took regional dimensions. Catholicos Öj nec' i wrote two treatises against the Phantasiasts (Docetists) and Paulicians (*Pawlikeank'*). The latter was the first credible account of a pro-Muslim heretical faction called Paulician as part of Armenian religious culture and politics at the time. In 717 the

Paulicians signed a treaty with the Arab commissioner of Armenia⁴⁴ and became the “auxiliaries of the Kingdom of the Tayaye,” wrote Michael the Syrian, the Bishop of Antioch.⁴⁵ Canon 32 of the Council of Dwin (719) considered the Paulicians as the descendants of the ancient Mcneans (or Messalians) and the allies of the “oppressors” (or the Arabs).⁴⁶ In other words, for the first time, Armenian dissident factions were defining their position not only against the Church but also regarding the Muslims and the Caliphate. They became the “auxiliaries” of the Arab armies. While earlier on, the eastern choice of the heterodox and dissident communities was not explicit and politically insignificant, during the first decades of the eighth century, the sectarian-Muslim alliance became a fact on the regional level, as I shall discuss later. Dissidence and heresy were major paradigms of interaction to the end of the Seljuk and some of the Mongol periods.

In his “Treatise against the Paulicians” Ōjnec’i wrote that the Paulicians

.... cunningly struck an alliance with the despots ... finding in them weapons to bring evils upon the Christians.... They studied their false and obscure scriptures and taught them to their ignorant followers It comes as no surprise [to us] to find them sharing similar notions with those whose satellites they are.⁴⁷

According to P. Sarkisian, previously, during the incumbency of Catholicos Eġea I, ostikan Walīd was a Paulician sympathizer but changed his attitude because Catholicos Ōjnec’i prosecuted them, and probably because the latter had Umayyad support.⁴⁸ The Arabs considered the Chalcedonians pro-Byzantine enemies of the Caliphate, and the Catholicos found an opportunity to accelerate his efforts toward church union with the anti-Chalcedonian churches.⁴⁹

On the Byzantine side, the situation took a sudden turn in favor of the Paulicians. Emperor Leo III the Isaurian (717–741) initiated a very broad iconoclastic program against the cult of images. At the same time, the Umayyads launched large-scale repressive operations against the Christians in Syria. Under the circumstances, the religions in the region, including Christian as well as Islamic iconoclasm and Shī’ism, were heavily politicized. The Paulicians gathered on and near Byzantine territories on the marshes of the western Tigris and further north on the Borderlands between the two empires. They grew in power and numbers. As militant elements and “heretics,” in 747 Emperor Constantine V (741, 743–775) deported large communities

of Paulicians to Thrace and settled them as bulwarks on the Bulgarian Borderlands.

In 740s, the taxes were again raised and an annual supply of slaves from all subjects was imposed by the ostikan, future caliph Marwān II (744–750) and the last Umayyad caliph. These measures clearly contradicted the previous oaths to Christians. Because of the Arab–Byzantine wars, trade routes were disrupted and Armenia was in a grave economic and monetary crisis. Taxes could not be collected. In addition, the appointment of Ašot Bagratuni as governor by the Caliphate enraged the brothers Grigor and Dawit' Mamikoneans and exacerbated internal conflict. The two Mamikonean brothers were exiled to Yemen as enemies of the Caliphate. After the death of caliph Walid II in 743 they returned and organized an uprising. Ašot resorted to Damascus and Grigor Mamikonean took over his position of iṣṣan or prince, governor. Already allied with the Arab side, the Bagratuni was brought back and restored, David Mamikonean was executed. The country was still in severe economic crisis.

Just before the demise of the Umayyads and the rise of the 'Abbāsids, a second Armenian revolt was organized by the Mamikoneans in 747/8–750. The Bagratunis tried to maintain some neutrality, but when urged to join the rebellion, Ašot Bagratuni escaped but was captured by the pro-Byzantine nobles. But in 750 when the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate (750/132H–1258/656H) was established, circumstances changed radically. The Armenian revolt was suppressed very harshly by first 'Abbāsīd caliph Abu'l-'Abbās (750/12H–754/136H). His successor Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr (754/136H–775/159H) multiplied the taxes and escalated the persecution of Christians, causing even more dissent. Thirteen million silver dirhams were to be paid by the province of Armīnyah, half of which came from Armenia proper, which at the time was also a stage for the Arab–Byzantine wars.

By this time, the Paulicians, the “lewd sons of sinfulness,” as often described by the Church, had established themselves on the Upper Euphrates and the Tigris. When the Mamikonean revolt failed, and Mušel was killed in clashes with the Arabs, Constantine V Kopronymos (741,743–775) arrived in 751 and occupied Melitene and Karin. The interruption of about two years in the career of the Emperor was caused by an Armenian called Artabasdos the Icon-Lover, Leo II's chamberlain and son-in-law.⁵⁰ The iconoclastic disputes and troubles raged everywhere, including on the Bulgarian Borderlands, and lasted through the entire eighth century and the next. There were many

Armenians not only in the Byzantine military but the administration as well, such as army generals Michael al-Batrīq, Tačat Anjewac'ī (during 760s), and Alexius Museles (Mušeł, during 790s). In the east and south, there was another revolt at Sasun.⁵¹ In 753, Sahak Bagratuni was appointed iṣḫan, and Smbat (Ašot the Blind's son) *sparapet*.⁵² In 755, the caliph's brother made a fact-finding expedition into Armīnyah and at the same time Constantine V made another raid into Melitene, Germanica, and Karin. He deported thousands of Armenians and monophysitic Syrians into Thrace.⁵³ Despite being almost "ancient," the following from Gibbon is a humorous and quite accurate evaluation of these times:

About the middle of the eighth century Constantine, surnamed Kopronymos [dung-named] by the worshippers of images, had made an expedition into Armenia, and found in the cities of Melitene and Karin, a great number of Paulicians, his kindred heretics. As a favor or punishment, he transplanted them from the banks of the Euphrates to Constantinople and Thrace; and by emigration, their doctrine was introduced and diffused in EuropeThe Paulicians of Thrace resisted the storms of persecution, maintained a secret correspondence with their Armenian brethren and gave aid and comfort to their preachers, who solicited not without success, the infant faith of the Bulgarians.⁵⁴

The politicization and militarization of the Paulicians coincided with the 'Abbāsid organization of the Borderlands and Armenian dissidence had very important developments. The changing policies of the two empires and alliances or conflict with the east and/or west granted the Paulicians high degrees of military prowess and political preparedness. During the next century they had strongholds of their own on the Borderlands.

Notes

1. Bertold Spuler, *The Age of the Caliphs*, trans. F. R. Bagley (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1995), 33.
2. Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates* (New York: Longman Group, 1986), 77.
3. Ibid., 78–79.
4. Spuler, *Age of the Caliphs*, 33.
5. Ibid., 34.
6. Kennedy, *Prophet*, 83.
7. Ibid., 88.
8. Spuler, *Age of the Caliphs*, 37.
9. Kennedy, *Prophet*, 121.

10. Spuler, *Age of the Caliphs*, 39.
11. During the Lebanese Civil war 1975–1991, the Maronite Christian militants of the same regions at Zgharta in north Lebanon “surfaced” as *al-Maradah*.
12. Redgate, *The Armenians* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 170.
13. Nina G. Garsoïan, “The Arab Invasions and the Rise of the Bagratuni - 640-884,” in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, ed. R. G. Yovannisean, vol. I (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 117–42, 124.
14. Charanis, *The Armenians in the Byzantine Empire* (Lisbon: Gulbenkian Foundation, 1963), 21.
15. Manuël Jinbashian, *Church-State Relations in Armenia during the Arab Domination* (Lisbon: Gulbenkian Foundation, 2000), 127.
16. Ibn al-Athir, ‘Izz ed-Dīn Abū’l- Ḥusn ‘Alī Ibn Abī’l-Karam Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahīd al-Shaybānī, *Al-Kāmil fi’l-Ta’rīkh*, [Universal/Complete History], vols. I–IX (Cairo, 1934–1935), vol. IV, 94–95.
17. Ibid., 84.
18. Jinbashian, *Church-State Relations*, 136.
19. Lewond, *Patmut’iwn Lewondeay Meci Vardapeti Hayoc’* (St. Petersburg: N. Skorokhodov, 1987), 29. In translation of Činbašean, *Church-State Relations*, 137.
- *20. Yovhannēs Draxanakertc’i, *Yovhannu Kat’olikosi Drasxanakertec’woy Patmu’iwn Hayoc’* (Tbilisi: N. Aghanian Press) 1912), 97.
21. Grigor Tat’ewac’i, *Enddēm Tačkac’* [Against the Muslims] in Babgēn Kulesērean, *Islamē Hay Grakanut’ean mēj ew I K’ašunēn K’alacu* [Islam in Medieval Armenian Literature and Excerpts from the Kashun] (Vienna: Mxit’arists, 1930), 122.
22. Kennedy, *Prophet*, 102–3.
23. Ibid., 103.
24. Jinbashian, *Church-State Relations*, 142.
25. Garsoïan, “The Arab Invasions,” 128.
26. Spuler, *Age of the Caliphs*, 47.
27. Ibid.
28. Kennedy, *Prophet*, 106.
29. Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc’i, *History of Armenia*, trans. G. H. Maksoudian (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987), 104.
30. Kirakos Ganjakec’i, *Patmut’iwn Hayoc’* [History of Armenians], ed. K. A. Melik-Ohanjanean (Erevan: Haykakan SSR GA Publications, 1961), 68.
31. Jean Pierre Mahé, “Confession religieuse et identité nationale dans l’église arménienne du VII^e au XI^e Siècles,” in *Des Parthes au Califat: Quatre Leçons sur la Formation de l’Identité Arménienne* [From the Parthians to the Caliphate: Four Lessons on the Formation of Armenian Identity], ed. Nina Garsoïan and Jean Pierre Mahé (Paris: De Boccard, 1997), 59–78, 65.
32. Ibid., 66.
33. Jean Pierre Mahé, “Le Rôle et la fonction du Catholikos d’Arménie du VII^e Siècle au XI^e Siècle,” in *Des Parthes au Califat: Quatre Leçons sur la Formation de l’Identité Arménienne*, 79–102, 99.
34. Ibid., 79.
35. Jinbashian, *Church-State Relations*, 177.

36. Mahé, "Le rôle et la fonction," 188.
37. Kennedy, *Prophet*, 109.
38. Ibid., 119.
39. Ibid., 118.
40. Ibid., 116.
41. Ibid., 117.
42. Spuler, *Age of the Caliphs*, 50.
43. D. M. Lang, *Armenia Cradle of Civilization* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1980), 176.
44. Parsef Sarkisian, *Usumnasirut'iwn Manikea-Pawlikean T'onrakec'ineru Alandin ew Grigor Narekac'woy T'ult'ë* [A Study of the Manichaean-Paulician-T'ondrakian Sect and the Epistle of Grigor Narekac'i] (Venice: St. Lazar, 1893), 54.
45. Michael the Syrian, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, vol. II, 482; Garsoïan, *The Paulicians* (The Hague: Mouton, 1967), 149.
46. Arsën Łldjian, *Kanongik' Hayoc'* [Book of Armenian Canons] (Tbilisi: Łukasean Press, 1913), 148–49.
47. Yovhan Ōjnec'i, "Norin Ėnddēm Pawlikeanc' [Against the Paulicians]," in *Yovhannu Imastaseri Awc'nec'woy Matenagrut'iwnk'* [Writings of the Philosopher Yovhan Ōjnec'i] (Venice: St. Lazar, 1833), 34.
48. Sarkisian, *Study of the Manichaean*, 57. In the context of the Yovhan's apocryphal visit, Garsoïan mentions Baghdad as the capital of the empire. At the time, the Umayyad capital was Damsacus and the city of Baghdad, the capital of the 'Abbāsids was built later on.
49. Garsoïan, "The Arab Invasions," 125.
50. Lang, *Armenia Cradle of Civilization*, 185.
51. Garsoïan, "The Arab Invasions," 129.
52. Ibid., 130.
53. Charanis, *Armenians in the Byzantine Empire*, 16.
54. Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (New York, 1932), 887.

The Armenians in the 'Abbāsid World—The Paradigms of Borderlands and Dissidence

I. The 'Abbāsids and the Persian–Islamic Legacies

In general, 'Abbāsid-Armenian history is stormy. In 763/145H, 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Manṣūr inaugurated the establishment of the city of Baghdad, and in the next year he moved to his new capital.¹ In 762–764 the Khazars invaded Armenia and at the same time, the new ostikan (or governor, commissioner), whose mother was said to be a Siwni princess, escalated persecutions against the Christians to unprecedented degrees. In 768, the Armenian Church summoned a council at Partaw to deal with severe circumstances on all levels.

The declared motive of the 'Abbāsids in overthrowing the Umayyads was having a “true” *mahdī* or an *imām* from the “clan of the Prophet” or *Āl Muḥammad*.² As the true heirs of the Prophet’s mission, as they claimed, the Abbāsids had to show greater zeal than the Umayyads. The summer and fewer winter expeditions were organized to assert the legitimacy of Islam and the genuine militancy of the true Muslims against the Byzantines.

Until the accession of Caliph al-Ma'mūn (813/198H–833/218H), the entire Near East saw prolonged wars.³ The province of North Africa was lost, and the anti-Muslim Khurramids stormed Azerbaijan. They were suppressed by the Caliph’s brother Abū Ishāq, future Caliph al-Mu'taṣim (833/218H–842/227H).⁴ The latter had his private force of multi-ethnic and highly trained troops.⁵

The 'Abbāsids adopted not only the style of the Persian court and administrative system, but the latter’s imperialist and elitist politics too.

The Achaemenids, the Parthian kings as well as the Sassanians shared this tradition.⁶ Similar to Persian emperors, the 'Abbāsid caliphs gradually isolated themselves from their people and the system deteriorated into tax farming. The *wazīr* (or vizier) was in charge of administration. Carrier pigeons and a network of towers connected Baghdad to Morocco.⁷ Arabic, the language of the Qur'ān, united the entire Islamic world and trade flourished because there were no custom barriers or other borders from Baghdad to Spain. The 'Abbāsids also developed a very powerful intelligence service and treated their adversaries with extreme brutality. The post of court executioner was established at this time.⁸

II. The 'Abbāsid Project of Borderlands

Following the massive retreat of Emperor Heraclius (610–641) from Syria in 636 following the Battle of Yarmūk, a no man's land was created that the Arabs called *al-ḍawāḥī* or the outer lands.⁹ However, the Borderlands between the two empires were not clearly marked until the rise of the 'Abbāsids. After the early Arab campaigns into al-Shām, the frontiers land or a Borderlands region was marked by medieval Arab geographies. It separated Asia Minor from Syria, the *thughūr* or the passes protected the *'awāṣim*, or the fortified cities just behind them. This region roughly corresponded to the old Roman Cilicia and part of Fourth Armenia, north and east of it. Antioch, on the Mediterranean, became a Muslim outpost, and pressure was maintained against the Greeks through expeditions on land and at sea. The first frontier province was the Jund al-Qinnaṣrīn which included Antioch and Aleppo in its east. During the Umayyad period, the Qays and other tribes settled there and fortifications were built in al-Maṣṣīṣah (Mamestia/Mopsuesta) and the surrounding.¹⁰ Other settlements further north, in Melitene, Mar'ash, and Samosata frequently changed hands and were less successful.

From 692/73H to the fall of the Umayyads in 750, the provinces of al-Jazīrah, Moṣul, Armenia, Arrān, Azerbaijan, and occasionally Georgia had formed a loose unit. This unit was sometimes identified as the Umayyad North, about which Bonner says:

The great Umayyad princes Muḥammad Ibn Marwān, Maslamah Ibn 'Abd al-Malik, Marwān Ibn Muḥammad ruled as 'viceroys' over this vast area, sending deputies to govern the various provinces. While these 'viceroys' were often preoccupied with Armenia and the Caucasus, where Khazar invasions presented a constant threat,

they also conducted and sent expeditions into the west against Byzantium, through the province of al-Jazīrah.¹¹

The right and left sides of the Umayyad North gradually separated into the *thughūr* al-Shām and the *thughūr* of al-Jazīrah, but the distinction was never rigid or clear. The tribes of Qaysid descent maintained supremacy for a considerable period. In general, the Umayyad family owned much of the land. Marwān Ibn Muḥammad was the governor of Armenia and Azerbaijan in 732/114, future Umayyad caliph (in 744/127), held properties in the entire "Umayyad North." Some clans too were given territories and settled there.¹²

By the time of the rise of the 'Abbāsīds, the Borderlands became a distinct region, a "cordon sanitaire" or a protective belt. Assuming the role of Muslim *ghāzīs*, and in preparation for a large-scale *jihād*, Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (786/170H–809/194H) launched an elaborate Borderlands project. According to al-Ṭabarī, in 807/191H he ordered the destruction of the churches on these locations as an initial step.¹³ He also forbade the *dhimīs* of Baghdad to dress like the Muslims, to ride horses, and imposed a *jizyah* or tribute on the Greeks as well.¹⁴ He made frequent journeys to the Borderlands, which was designed to become a conceptual and actual substratum/basis for the *jihād*.¹⁵

Hārūn al-Rashīd's plan was to develop a self-sufficient frontier district of *ʿawāṣim* behind the *thughūr*, where the Muslim community could achieve unity and be solely occupied by holy war against the enemies of Islam. Indeed, this province originally comprised all the Muslim holdings in the borders including both frontline fortresses and supporting positions in their rear. But eventually the region failed to emerge as a self-sufficient district as planned, even during the reign of Hārūn. Just as the *jihād* project was doomed, so was the related project of the Borderlands. The region split into a two-tiered province of *thughūr* or the passageways from the northwest to the southeast, and the *ʿawāṣim*.¹⁶ Even though the Islamic Empire had other Borderlands too, it was the *thughūr* that remained the Borderlands par excellence.¹⁷ Even before the 'Abbāsīd project, the territories between the two empires were different from both the East and the West.

An important part of medieval Islamic–Armenian history must be studied in the context and through the paradigms of *Akritics* or Borderlands. This region had its own peculiar type of historicity because it was an appropriate milieu for indigenous Near Eastern syncretism

and extra-establishment cultures to flourish. Under the strictly orthodox establishments of Armenia, Byzantium, and the Caliphate these trends were unwelcome. Bonner says,

Residents on both sides had more in common with one another than with the people of their own hinterlands and capitals. This impression certainly comes across in the popular epic, such the *Digenis Akritis* cycle in Greek and the *Delhemma* (*Dhāt al-Himmah*) in Arabic. if certain elite groups eventually prevailed there, their identity is still not clear.¹⁸

While classic categories of traditional histories failed to draw the historicity of the Borderlands, Arab as well as Armenian and Byzantine histories of these periods provided very vague accounts of these locations. For centuries, the Borderlands became a marker as well as assimilator of differences. It allowed the flow of communications, be they commercial or social-cultural. It also became a breeding ground for heterodox trends like Paulicianism and T'ondrakism, and among other things, for a peculiar landholding warrior aristocracy. This is the background and context of a largely shared tradition of popular epic poetry, such as *Digenis Akritis*.¹⁹

The fortress-towns of the eighth and the ninth centuries of the Borderlands cannot be compared to the earlier or later cities. These were administrative and military centers, with little or no economic and/or legal status. In fact, most of what we know about them comes from later periods, after they were revived and began developing into cities in the tenth century.²⁰ Even though Byzantine officials and all sorts of Muslims were in the region, urban life on *akritic* lands was isolated and poor in every respect until the massive Byzantine expansion during the tenth century. The local communities had opportunity to increase property and rise in status.²¹ Large estates came under the control of local militant clans²² many of whom were Armenians of different religious backgrounds. In fact a very significant number of Armenians had ended up on the Borderlands, where Arab tribes had settled earlier on, alongside local Greek and other Christian communities.

The Borderlands peoples developed extraordinary patterns of political careers. As such, they fell out of the histories of medieval chroniclers who were mostly men of the church and otherwise conservative figures. Consequently, no narratives ever developed for these factions and places in the histories of the Armenians, Arabs, and Byzantines.

It appears that the epic cycles, to be looked at later, constitute the only direct records for that environment.

Muslim culture is primarily urban and both the people and the ruling elite always preferred urban centers and worked on improving fortifications. The fortress-towns expanded to become cities and regular salaried troops, militant factions, and marginal people resided there. Eventually, these cities played significant economic, social, and cultural roles.²³ To maintain the ritual of *jihād* and for internal propaganda as well, the summer and winter expeditions continued from and around these cities.²⁴ Otherwise, as mentioned, the Borderlands were distinct from the protected territories behind them. The subject of Borderlands, the peoples, and their cultures are still understudied.²⁵

III. Armenia under the 'Abbāsids to the Year 862/248H

From the beginning of their caliphate, the 'Abbāsids raised all taxes and initiated religious persecutions in Armenia east of the Borderlands. Another Armenian revolt in 774 was inevitable. It was led by Artawazd Mamikonean, but this time around, the pro-Arab Bagratunis supported it, while the Arcrunis and Siwnis remained neutral. However, a son of Sahak, Ašot Bagratuni tried to dissuade the naxarars warning them of the consequences. The uprisings spread, tax-collectors were killed, but the Battle of Bagrewand on April 25, 775 put an end to the rebellion. Ašot was very briefly appointed governor, as a reward by the Arabs for his refusal to join the rebels.²⁶ The defeat caused a fatal blow to the naxarars. The Mamikoneans, Kamsarakans, Amatunis (with the exception of a small branch in Artaz), Rštunis, Saharunis, and Gnunis crossed to the Byzantine side. There were some migrations into the opposite direction too by pro-Arab factions and individuals. Medieval Armenian historians related the exodus of the nobility in most dramatic terms.

In the ongoing Arab–Byzantine wars at the time and the large-scale Arab offensive of 780–781, the case of Tačat Anjewac'ī is an interesting paradigm; he is mentioned by most sources. Tačat was an Armenian general in the Byzantine army, who around 760 decided to cross to the Arab side with twelve thousand troops. Previously, he had fought in the armies of Emperor Constantine V against the Bulgars and was appointed strategos (governor with military and civil powers). But when he returned to the Borderlands, he was said to have rejected the policies of Queen Irene (the regent), deserted the Byzantine army

and joined the Arabs in 782. He was rewarded by the governorship of Armīyah.

The re-establishment of orthodoxy and the end of iconoclasm at the Byzantine court brought all Paulician activity on the eastern borders under very unfavorable light. Suspecting that some of the Armenian nobility that had migrated to the Byzantine side had converted to Paulicianism, in 782 Constantine VI (780–797) summoned a thousand of the immigrant Armenian dignitaries to Constantinople, branded them with the fox sign of heretics and exiled them to various parts of the Empire.²⁷ The militant Paulician communities of Thrace received fresh additions in 778 when Leo IV the Khazar (775–780) brought in more Paulicians from the same locations in western Armenia and Upper Mesopotamia.²⁸ In 792 an unsuccessful revolt by Armenian soldiers in the Byzantine army caused the exile of a thousand of them to Sicily and other Mediterranean islands.²⁹

Two years later even greater numbers of Armenian Paulicians were brought to Thrace. According to J. Ivanow, these Paulicians gradually spread into the Italian mainland “in armed and militant legions” and from there they dispersed into many parts of Europe. Most sources agree that these heterodox communities played a role in the formation of medieval European sects such as the Manichaeans, Cathars, Albigenses, Patarenes, Poplicani, and others.³⁰

After the failure of consecutive rebellions, Armenia completely surrendered to the ‘Abbāsids. The *History* of Լեւոնդ is the most elaborate account of these times. The history of the Muslim Armenians of Hamshēn, or *Hamshēnahayk*, goes back to these events at the end of the eighth century. Refugees from Armenia, these communities settled in the Pontus, east of Trebizond and eventually embraced Islam probably to become immune to persecutions. It can be argued that these communities led by their prince Hamam (after whom their city was called Hamshēn or Hamam-a-šēn, or built by Hamam) were in fact heterodox communities, probably Paulicians and anyway sympathizers of Islam. Like many others, they easily embraced Islam maintaining their ethnicity to this day. There are still large communities of Muslim Armenians of Hamshēn in Turkey, the Republic of Armenia, and other parts of the ex-Soviet Union in Asia. They have maintained their ethnicity, their Islam is syncretistic and their dialect is based on a vocabulary that includes of Armenian, Turkish, Arabic, and Kurdish words. Tracing their history along the lines suggested in this study, also in the Near Eastern contexts is probably the most

appropriate way of dealing with similar communities in modern Turkey. Over the past millennium, circumstances created a whole series of syncretistic phenomena that are still treated only on the margins of mainstream histories. In this respect a book by Matti Moosa is a most intriguing study.³¹

IV. The Arab Tribal Emirates in Armenia

Arab tribal migrations into Armīnyah started after the middle of the seventh century and accelerated during the next. Following the rebellions of 750 and 775, the exodus of the naxarars and the migration of the populace (fleeing oppression and taxes), the tribes filled in the vacuum. Before the end of the century, Hārūn al-Rashīd systematically settled more tribes for defense purposes, as he claimed. These tribes established principalities or emirates that developed into separatist enclaves. They were in constant conflict with each other, with the Caliphate as well as with the Armenian naxarars.³²

The twentieth-century historian Aram Tēr Lewondean, the authority on the history of the tribal emirates, divides the history of the emirates into two periods. The early period starts during what he calls direct Arab rule in 701 and ends with the rise of the Bagratuni dynasty in 884. The second period begins at this time and ends with the fall of the Bagratunis in 1045. Taking the Bagratuni kingdom as the basis of this division is questionable. The Bagratunis could seldom control the emirates, whose history and fate were mostly conditioned by regional politics. Furthermore, the granting of the status of a king to the Bagratuni prince did not cause any radical change in the governance of the region or in Armenia itself. Regardless, with the exception of very rare moments the Bagratunis could not achieve what may be considered an integrated kingdom. Not only the naxarar system at the time did not allow it, but a constitutional and administrative framework was never developed by them or by the other dynastic houses.

On their part and as expected, the anarchistic tribal emirates contributed to the traditional rivalries between the naxarars, and to the complication of relations with the Caliphate, which they often fought. When the Caliphate allowed the elevation of the Bagratunis as kings in Armenia, and the emirates naturally wanted to maintain their independence. In fact, both the Bagratunis of Širak and the Arcrunis of Vaspurakan failed to control them and eventually lost the battles. When Byzantium finally succeeded to eradicate some of these emirates, it was the Kurdish and not the Armenian element that benefited.³³

The struggle against these emirates and the ostikans constituted the material of the Armenian epic cycle of *Sasunc'i Dawit'*.

As mentioned, the Muslims always preferred cities for economic and defense purposes. While the Armenian nobility established itself in rural strongholds, the urban communities and cities were cosmopolitan—even if the Armenians were the majority—and very often controlled by the Muslims. The governors resided in the cities.³⁴ The situation left a deep and negative impact on Armenian social and cultural development. Large segments of the Armenian urban population lost contact with the “ruling” Armenian nobility and sometimes with the Church too. In territories under the tribal amirs, the Islamic Law or the *Shari'ah* was the universal basis (even though each emirate had its own style of government and politics), and local Armenians were part of this given legal system rather than a so-called Armenian one. Dwin, Naxičewan, Karin, Arčēš, Xlat', Berkri, Manazkert, Arcn, Her/Xoy, Nrpkert/Mayyāfāriqīn, Balēš, and few others in and around Armenia were in Muslim hands when the Seljuk invasions started in the eleventh century.³⁵ The city of Dwin and its province almost always remained in the hands of the Arab ostikans, and only occasionally did Armenians recover it.³⁶ Daylamite Iranians and Kurds began arriving in Dwin and eventually the Kurdish Shaddādids (Ayyūbid Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn's clan) were its lords.³⁷

The locations of the emirates are meticulously defined by A. Tēr Łewondean. According to him the tribe of Bakr was in Ałjnik' and al-Jazīrah, and the area came to be known as Diyār Bakr (home/land of the tribe of Bakr). The Qaysids were in Ałiowit (or Arčēš), Xlat', Hark', Apahunik', Manazkert, and Xnus/Hinis. The Arabs always had a preference for Xlat' on the western shores of Lake Van. Similar to the other cities, this city too had a mixed population. The Persian Ismā'īlī poet philosopher traveler, Nāṣir Ibn Khosraw relates that Arabic, Persian, and Armenian were spoken in Xlat'.³⁸ Dwin or Dābil, in turn was a favorite city of the Arabs. It was situated just south east of modern Erevan. Manazkert, north of Lake Van was another Arab favorite. Only briefly it fell to Dawit' Curopalate of Tayk' at the end of the tenth century, it was then transferred to Byzantium, re-populated by Armenians, and finally fell to the Seljuks in 1071. Always according to Tēr Łewondean, the Uthmānids were in Turuberan, west of Manazkert, Karin, and Berkri. Theodosiopolis was a Byzantine outpost, the Arabs too used it as a military base. In turn, it had a cosmopolitan population with a large Armenian community.³⁹

During the early eighth century, the Shaybānīs were in Aġnik' and several *amīrs* of these tribes were appointed as ostikans. They resided in Bartaw/Barda'ah on the lower Kur/Kura River in Ganjak/Ganja in modern Azerbaijan. The tribe of Sulaym from the Qaysids, initially sent to Armīnyah during the term of Harūn al-Rashīd and a Qaysid Emirate settled in the provinces of Hark' and Apahunik' where Manazkert (or Manzikert) is. The Jaḥḥāfīs were a vagrant tribe, and during the early years of their arrival, their ancestor married the daughter of Muṣeġ Mamikonean, the leader of the 774–775 revolt. They laid claims of inheritance on Mamikonean lands in Taron, west of Lake Van. The Zurārīs were in Arcn and Baġesh. Mūsā Ibn Zurārah married the sister of Bagarat Bagratuni, while his son Abū'l-Maḡrā married an Arcruni princess and secretly converted to Christianity. During the revolts, this tribe took the side of the Armenians. Anyway not too friendly toward their Armenian neighbors, in 844 the emirates were involved in the persecutions and forced conversion of Christians in the districts bordering Armenia.

After the death of Taċat Anjewac'i, the Bagratuni Ashot Msaker (meat/man-eater) was appointed governor of Armīnyah in 804. He remained in office until 826 and expanded his territories into Taron, Širak, and other provinces, while attempting to expel the Jaḥḥāfīs from Taron. In neighboring Iberia or Georgia, his uncle was establishing another Bagratuni dynasty. A son of Msaker, Smbat *Xostowanot* (confessor) was the army commander; another son, Bagarat, received the title of Prince of Princes from the 'Abbāsīds in 826. During the same period, in the south, the Arcrunis were consolidating their position as a rival dynastic power in neighboring Vaspurakan, in turn with Arab support and encouragement. Both houses were looked upon as bulwarks against the Greeks, who in turn considered the Armenians their vassals to be deployed in their regional politics whenever necessary.

The situation in the east, and in Siwnik' in particular, was different. In this southern part of present-day Armenia, the Siwnis were the dominant naxarars. By geography and culture they often stood apart from the west. Previously, they managed to obtain some sort of autonomy from the Sassanians in the sixth century. During the rebellion of Khurramīd Babak against the Caliphate in the early ninth century, Vasak Siwni made the most of the situation and gave his daughter in marriage to their heresiarch Babak, hoping to gain him on his side. After his death in 821, the land was divided between his two sons, Sahak and P'ilippos. The first took Geġarkunik' east of Lake Sewan,

with the famous Makenoc' Vank', the second took eastern Siwnik' or Vayoc' Jor (modern Eġgnajor), with even the more famous monastery of Tat'ew.⁴⁰ Following Babak's aggressive policies and violent conduct against the Armenian population, in 836 the Siwnis captured and gave this enemy of the Caliphate to the Arabs and were generously rewarded by the Caliph al-Mu'tašim.⁴¹

V. Dissident Versus Orthodox Politics—Paulicians, Babakians, and T'ondrakians

A. Social Unrest in Apahunik' and Siwnik' in the Ninth–Tenth Centuries

Some of the most violent clashes between Armenians, Arabs, and local amīrs occurred between 830 and 837 in Širak, Apahunik' Siwnik', Aġuank', and Georgia. Ašot Bagratuni, a vassal and ally of the Arabs, and Qaysid Amīr Sawādah of Manazkert rose against the ostikan Khālid Ibn Yazīd.⁴² In alliance with the Jaġġāfīs, also defying the advice of Catholicos Dawit' II (806–833), Armenians clashed with the Arabs north of Dwin on the Hrazdan River, but lost. Disputes and division between the naxarars were reflected in the election of Catholicos Yovhan IV Ōwayec'i (833–855).

During the early 830s, a rebellion of different yet greater dimensions had occupied both the emirates and the naxarars. Dissident communities appeared in Apahunik' led by their heresiarch and founder Smbat Zarehawanc'i, a native of Zarehawan situated just west of the northwestern shores of Lake Urmia.⁴³ His followers were identified as T'ondrakians, after a small town (probably legendary) called T'onrak or T'ondrak or T'ondurak (or oven, because of the volcanic nature of the land and hot springs), just south of Manazkert in the province of Apahunik'. The earliest account of Smbat and his followers is the "Epistle of Grigor Narekac'i to the Abbot of the Monastery of Kčaw."⁴⁴ During the same years, the Paulicians were still very powerful and active in the western parts of Apahunik'.

Smbat's execution around the year 835 by Qaysid amīr Abū'l-Ward (Abelbard or Abelwart in medieval Armenian texts) has intrigued historians. If Smbat's teachings were close or "akin" to the faith of Abū'l-Ward or Islam, as Narekac'i and other sources reported, why would Abū'l-Ward want to suppress his seemingly natural ally? Similar to Khurramid Babak (who for a while was in this region then moved to the east), Smbat's claim to be the Paraclete or the "expected savior" and Christ should not have concerned Abū'l-Ward to the extent of eliminating him. According to Narekac'i, just before executing him,

the amīr told Smbat that if indeed he was similar to Christ, just as the latter resurrected from death, he too could do the same.⁴⁵

It seems that the position of the Qaysid amīr towards Smbat had purely political motives. At that time, the emirate had been subordinated to Ašot Bagratuni and the elimination of a dangerous figure was a service the amīr was rendering to the Bagratunis and the Caliphate. Smbat had close ties with the dissident sub-Shī'ī Babakians, the enemies of the Sunnīs.

During these years, while the T'ondrakians were gradually organizing, the Paulicians under the leadership of Sergius were given lands by the local amīrs in Mananali and T'ulayl. Grigor Magistros, another major source about the T'ondrakians, says that the "poisonous mischievous [heretics] gathered in one location and consented to follow the orders of iconoclastic, lewd, lawless and devil-loving Smbat."⁴⁶ Early T'ondrakism is contemporary to Khurramid Babak's movement in the east and as of this period the link between Irano-Islamic movements and what came to be known as T'ondrakism or later Armenian sectarianism in general is a fact of regional history.

B. Paulicians, T'ondrakians, and Babakians—Paradigm of Near Eastern Dissidence

For its proximity to northwestern Iran, Siwnik' was a stage for Khurramid–Babakian unrest from 817 to 836/7 in particular. During these decades the Caliphate was busy with wars against Byzantium. Caliph al-Ma'mūn died in 833 in one of these battles in the region of Cilicia, without having eradicated the Babakians.

The Khurramids were known as Babakians after Babak (or Bābik, Babān). He was a follower of Jawidān Abū Muslim. When Jawidān was killed by Sahak Bagratuni in 816 at Taron in the west, Babak claimed to be his reincarnation, according to Ibn al-Athīr.⁴⁷ His followers looked upon him as the *al-mahdī al-muntazar*, or the "awaited savior," who would liberate the suppressed multitudes from Sunnī 'Abbāsīd oppressors. The history of the Babakians is told in several versions at different times. According to Ibn al-Athīr, the Khurramids appeared as of 808,⁴⁸ but he speaks of Khurramid-related events only after 817. He relates the appearance of the sect as follows:

In the year 817/201H Bābik Khurrāmī led the followers of Jawidān Ibn Sahl, lord of Baght. He made them believe that he was the incarnation of the latter, and he began to lay waste on the land and destroy everything. 'Jawidān' means eternal, permanent, and

'*khurram*' means pleasure and Kurramism is the teachings of the Magians or Zrwanism. For them a man may marry his mother, sister, and daughter and for this reason it is called the religion of pleasure. They believe in transmigration, which is the transference of the souls from one being into another.⁴⁹ They drink wine, even and especially on the battlefield.⁵⁰

The syncretistic nature of the sect is clearly indicated by Ibn al-Athīr. According to Ibn al-Athīr, the 'Abbāsids began their campaigns against the movement in the year 820/205H.⁵¹ In the Armenian version of Michael the Syrian's *Chronicle*, the Babakians entertained many Christian beliefs too,⁵² hence the similarities between them and their contemporaries, the Paulicians and T'ondrakians, that represented both syncretistic trends. Whatever was written about the Irano-Islamic sects of these periods can easily be applied to the pro-Muslim Armenian sects too. Indeed, earlier on, Yovhan Ōjnec'i and many after him accused the Armenian heresies of adopting "Persian customs" and Islamic beliefs. Considering them Kurds, Bar Hebraeus puts the beginning of Babakian unrest in 827 and says:

At this time some Muslim Kurds attacked the Arabs claiming that their awaited king or *al-Mahdī* had appeared to them Babak wore a veil on his face and called himself the Messiah and the Holy Ghost. He gathered a great multitude around him and fortified himself in the mountains of Kurdistan. When al-Ma'mūn sent troops and destroyed his Kurdish followers, the *Mahdī* fled to the land of Ishāq Ibn Aḥod [Ašot] the Armenian. Ishāq captured him and cut his head off. The followers of Babak retaliated but were soon driven off by Sahl Smbat.⁵³ [Few pages later] Bābik al-Khwarizmī who attacked the Arabs in Persia [in 837] was preparing to cross to the Byzantine side with four hundred of his men, when he was betrayed by *bat'riq* Isṭefān who took him to his house, where he put him in chains. The Caliph [al-Mu'tašim] was informed of the matter and dispatched Afshin [who brought him to Baghdad, where Babak was executed]. It is believed that Babak caused the death of over hundred thousand Arab men of the caliph's troops.⁵⁴

Even though many Kurds joined in the movement too, Babakianism could not be considered a Kurdish movement. The non-Arab and particularly Persian roots of the movement are beyond doubt, and as such, in some respects they also mark a reaction to the Arab-Sunnī establishment. In some sources the Babakians are explicitly called Mazdeans⁵⁵ as an indication to their syncretism and sympathy toward

other faiths including Zoroastrianism.⁵⁶ At the time and later on, the T'ondrakians were described in similar terms. Again, similar to T'ondrakism, Khurramism was a missionary movement too and the missionaries were called "angels."⁵⁷ Later on, the Ismā'īlīs and the Brethren of Purity used the term "angelic" (or superior to ordinary humans) for their spiritual elite. These and many other elements that bring these movements in a single context are indeed intriguing.

Similar to most other medieval sects in the region, both Christian and Muslim, the Khurramids and Babakians too led a libertine lifestyle and were accused of hedonism by Armenian and Arab authors. They encouraged drinking wine, liked song and dance, believed in free relations between men and women, and were accused of incestuous and homosexual practices. Zrwanist and Christian elements in their beliefs reflect the wide social-cultural basis of Near Eastern sectarianism, both Islamic and Christian.

Ut'mazean believes that the Khurramid-Babakian movement was primarily a movement of the "oppressed peasantry against the Arab exploiters." Quoting al-Maqdisī, he says that Babak attracted the *eluzaks* (bandits), the vagabonds [as in Paulician *astatoi* ?] and inciters. As mentioned earlier on, in medieval sources the terms "bandit," "outlaw," "brigand" (Armenian *goṭ*, *anorēn*, *eluzak*) were used universally often in reference to militant heterodox factions like the Paulicians, T'ondrakians, and the like. In this context, the existence of Armenians among Babak's troops was only natural. Ut'mazean explains:

Unquestionably, a considerable number of Babak's followers were Armenians, because without a popular basis in the native population, he could not have functioned. Furthermore, the Armenian lords would not have tolerated non-Armenian Khurramids on their land.⁵⁸

He also observes that there can be no records about Armenian Khurramids, because everyone would be reluctant to write about them. However, there are clear indications that Armenian peasants must have served in Babak's troops, at least as mercenaries. After his first defeat Babak lost his troops and returned to Siwnik', where he suddenly emerged with a new force, probably this time gathered from the local peasants who, anyway, were not too happy about the practices of the church and clergy in Siwnik'. Earlier too, Babak had Armenian recruits and followers.⁵⁹

In the west, militant Paulicians and T'ondrakians were prospering and they too were said to have *majūsī* or Zoroastrian connections. It can be established with some certainty that already in the ninth century, Armenian social-religious dissidence was a regional phenomenon from Siwnik' in the east to the western Euphrates, Melitene, and Țarşuş on the Borderlands. It is not therefore surprising to see that as soon as a leader rose anywhere, he soon gathered followers of all strata and ethnic backgrounds. The people of mountainous Ḥamadān, Isfahān, and all those who resented caliphal hegemony seem to have joined in the movement. The separatist naxarars of Siwnik' in turn initially supported Babak against the Caliphate.⁶⁰ Babak's marriage to Prince Vasak Siwni's daughter in the year 821⁶¹ gave him legitimacy and control over large territories in Siwnik'. When the people of Balk', a Siwni district, revolted against Babak, he devastated the land and put the people to the sword.⁶² But another rebellion by the people of Balk' drove Babak away. In the midst of these events, local Armenian lords, like Abū'l-Asad allied with Babak to gain his support.

Inevitably, while involved in local battles for influence, Babak clashed with the Arab Shaybānī ostikan. After several failures, in 835, a major campaign led by Afshīn finally succeeded in isolating him. Ibn al-Athīr has a detailed description of the last days of the "unfaithful-blasphemer" Babak.⁶³ After managing to escape from Afshīn's siege, Babak reached Siwni territories. When he was trying to cross to the Byzantine side, he was spotted by Siwni Prince Sahl Smbatean, known as Sahl Ibn Smbāt al-Armanī in Arab sources. This man had a personal vengeance. It was said that Babak had raped Sahl's mother, sister, and wife in his presence. Sahl lured Babak to his fortress and sent a message to Afshīn. He was rewarded and his position was secured for a while.⁶⁴ Babak, the "devil of Khurasān" was taken to Baghdad and executed in 837 in the presence of Caliph al-Mu'taṣim. According to Ibn al-Athīr, in his twenty-year career, Babak had caused the death of 255,000 people.⁶⁵

Conditions in Armenia deteriorated between 850 and 855 and Prince of Princes Bagarat Bagratuni and Prince Ashot Arcruni led consecutive revolts against the Arab ostikan. Caliph al-Mutawakkil (847–861) sent Abū Sayyid as the new ostikan, who received the taxes collected by Bagarat and returned. But two officers of Abū Sayyid stayed in Aġjnik' and ravaged the province. They were killed by the local princes, reprisals followed, and fresh troops were sent led by Yūsuf, the next ostikan, to crush the rebellion. During 850–852 the region

of Aḡbak in Vaspurakan (east of Lake Van) was devastated and Yūsuf's troops moved to Xlat' destroying everything on their way. Bagarat fell captive and was dispatched to Sāmarrā'. Eventually, Yūsuf was killed by the people of Sasun and Turkish Būghā al-Kabīr (elder) replaced him until 855. In the context of these events, Ibn al-Athīr gives an interesting detail. He says that among the naxarars who supported Bagarat was the latter's Arab son-in-law, Mūsā Ibn Zurārah.⁶⁶

At the head of a large force, Būghā first entered Taron (west of Lake Van) and killed about thirty thousand of Sasun's rebellious inhabitants. Ašot Arcruni rose against him, but he too fell captive, and was sent to Samarrā' along with his son. These episodes are related in detail by Dasxuranc'i.⁶⁷ Eventually, almost the entire Armenian nobility was sent to exile in Samarrā', including Mūsā Ibn Zurārah and Grigor Mamikonean of Bagrewand. They were ordered to convert to Islam in return for their freedom. In 853, Būghā attacked Siwnik' then moved to Iberia/Georgia and Aḡuank'. The absence of the naxarars created a vacuum that was soon filled by the emirates and the newly arriving tribes, which established minor enclaves.

In the same year, the Armenian naxarars returned from Iraq after fake conversions and the death of Caliph al-Mutawakkil. It is believed that they were released through the influence of the Muslim Armenian general in the 'Abbāsīd army, 'Alī Ibn Yaḥyā al-Armanī. Only Smbat Sparapet *Xostovanot* was executed for refusing to convert. Based on the fifth-century paradigm of loyalty to faith and martyrdom for it, many scholars use the analogy between Vardan Sparapet Mamikonean facing Sassanian pressure and his martyrdom at Awarayr and Smbat Sparapet Bagratuni facing Muslim pressure. They are seen as "martyrs," even though the circumstances are totally different.

During these times of extreme pressures from the Caliphate, Byzantium in turn accelerated attempts to impose Chalcedonianism on the Armenians. In 862, it sent a proposal to Armenians for the union of the two churches. A council was held at Širakawan; the Armenians suggested that both those who were in favor or against Chalcedonianism had right of choice and neither would dismiss the other as heretical. To the displeasure of Byzantium, the council re-affirmed its non-Chalcedonian position.

In the context of these grave events, 'Alī Ibn Yaḥyā al-Armanī is often mentioned and linked to the Paulician–Muslim military alliance. Ibn al-Athīr says that in the summer of 852/239H, 'Alī led a

summer expedition against the Greeks. This is the year when Caliph al-Mutawakkil escalated his segregationist policies and ordered all dhimmīs to wear yellow gowns, and abstain from riding horses (but only mules and donkeys).⁶⁸ Ibn al-Athīr almost casually speaks of a Byzantine campaign against the Paulician leader, the Armenian Karbeas, and his “ally” ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abdallāh al-Aqtā in 857/242H. The caliph asked ‘Alī to organize a counter attack that winter.⁶⁹ In 861, a coalition led by ‘Umar Ibn Aqtā, Karbeas (Karibas in Arabic), and ‘Alī invaded Byzantine territories, and returned with slaves and a large booty.⁷⁰

In 862–863/249H, ‘Alī Ibn Yaḥyā al-Armanī was appointed governor over Armīnyah and within the year, Smbat’s son Ašot I Bagratuni was granted the title of Prince of Princes, as mentioned earlier. Again, the role of ‘Alī in this development is often mentioned. In 863, ‘Umar Ibn al-Aqtā marched against the Byzantine forces assisted by the people of Melitene. He was killed and the expedition ended in disaster. ‘Alī was on his way to Mayyafāriqīn when the news reached him, he turned back to go to the assistance of his allies, but he was killed in an ambush.⁷¹

As had happened in the past and would be the case in future, there were many Armenians fighting each other on both sides of the borderlands between the empires. The Paulician Karbeas led his compatriots alongside Yaḥyā as the head of Arab troops. On the other side, Emperor Michael III the Drunkard (842–867, the son of the Armenian empress and regent Theodora, 842–855) led a mostly Armenian army against the Muslim side. The next section is dedicated to the Paulician episode and *Digenis Akritis* that constitute a most peculiar period in Armenian and Near Eastern history.

VI. Paradigms of Syncretism and the Borderlands: The Paulician–Muslim Alliance—*Digenis Akritis* as History

A. The Paulicians and the Muslim Alliance

The history of Armenian Paulicians during the ninth century is intriguing in many respects and particularly important for this work. Still understudied, this period has its unique significance in the broader history of Armenian syncretism/dissidence, the Armenian–Muslim interactions, and the phenomenon of Borderlands in medieval Near Eastern history.

To this episode also belongs the epic of *Digenis Akritis* as the only testimony of a most intriguing aspect of Near Eastern culture. The legacy of these times and cultures is still very much alive and vibrant

in the folklore and popular cultures, but goes undetected in traditional histories.

During the decades from 830s to 880s, the Armenian sectarian–Muslim alliance, often referred to by Ojnec'i, Narekac'i, Michael the Syrian, and later authors until the fifteenth century, was also documented by Arab and Byzantine sources. It proved to be a major paradigm in Armenian–Muslim interactions throughout, as argued in this study. The factors that constituted this period are the growing significance of the Borderlands as a unique world and of the Paulician–Muslim alliance.

The first and probably the only original source about the military history of the Paulicians is the history of Peter of Sicily. According to P. Lemerle, this work was written as a confidential report by the monk Peter to the Byzantine emperor. The latter sent him on a mission to Tephrike during 869–870 to meet Paulician leader Chrysocheir/Chrysocheris. The book is preserved in one complete and good copy of the eleventh century (Vatican gr. 511 ff. 79–142).⁷² Peter of Sicily relates (§4) that he was initially sent to Tephrike, the Paulician stronghold, by the emperor to negotiate the exchange of some prisoners. He mentions that he was compelled to write, because while at Tephrike, he learned about a mission the Paulicians were preparing to send to Bulgaria. He felt that it was his duty to inform the “young” church of Bulgaria about the danger. He knew that the “Paulician state was trying to take the Byzantine state from the back” (or the Balkans).⁷³ At the end of the *History*, Peter gives more information on the circumstances of the writing of the book (§§ 187–88).

Peter's history remained relatively unknown because it was followed and eclipsed by the history of Photius (Vat. Ms. 511). The latter was entirely based on Peter's work, with obvious and intentional changes and modifications. Photius wrote during the Battle of Tephrike between Chrysocheir and the Byzantines in 871–872; Peter's work preceded this episode by two years.⁷⁴ While the former was concerned with the doctrinal aspects of Paulicianism, the latter traced its military track as a powerful opponent of the Empire and its religious primacy.

Lemerle divides Paulician history into doctrinal and military phases. According to this division, the latter began by the schism between their leaders, Sergios and Baanes who were both Armenian. Otherwise, he believes that the legendary accounts of the beginnings of Paulicianism come from hostile Byzantine–Orthodox sources. The enemies of the Byzantines, the Paulicians themselves resented

these accounts.⁷⁵ The Armenian roots of the sect are problematic and anyway Greek and Armenian sources do not coincide. On the Borderlands, from Armeniakon in the north to the Euphrates and Orontes in the south, there were Armenian Paulicians from the eighth century and probably earlier, to the twelfth century at least. Most sources, including the Crusader sources confirm this. As Lemerle observes too, in view of their discontentment toward the anti-Chalcedonian or heretical Armenians, the Byzantine sources wanted to establish the Manichaean and Armenian nature of the sect. On the other hand, the Armenian roots must be decisively established, adds Lemerle.⁷⁶

Arab sources consistently called the Paulicians *Baylaqānīs*, probably in transliteration from the Armenian forms of Paulician as *Pawlikean* or *Paylikean*. These words appeared in the thirty-second and last canon issued by the Council of Dwin summoned by Yovhan Ōjnec'ī in 719, in whose accounts of the Paulicians and Greek sources there are discrepancies.⁷⁷

Lemerle seems to be unaware of the fact that all the Armenian authors and documents before and after Ōjnec'ī, looked upon the sectarian movements as phases of a single and continuous trend that started in the fourth century. For example, Ōjnec'ī says that the Paulicians of his time were the continuators and remnants of the fourth-century Messalians or Mcīneans, as of the incumbencies of Nersēs I Partew the Great (353–373), Nersēs II (548/9–556/7) to Nersēs III (641–661). At every occasion all authors emphasized this aspect of sectarian history. Indeed, from the fourth century to the appearance of *The Key of Truth—A Manual of the Paulician Church in Armenia* at the end of the eighteenth century, the doctrines—as reported by their adversaries—underwent little change. Hence the argument in this work about the historicity of a strong dissident trend in Armenian Christianity as well as social–cultural–political history.

While after Ōjnec'ī there is a silence of two centuries about the Paulicians in Armenian sources, Greek sources are abundant. However, the latter differ in their accounts from Armenian sources of both earlier and later periods. During the seventh century, Emperors Constantine IV (668–685) and Justinian II (685–695) carried harsh attacks against these communities in North al-Shām and dispersed them. The first mention of Paulicians in the Greek sources is around 756 by Theophanus, when Syrian and Armenian heretics were transplanted by Constantine V in Constantinople and Thrace.⁷⁸

Concerning the founder(s) of the Paulicians, several names are mentioned beginning with a semi-legendary "Manichean" woman called Kallinike and her sons, Constantine Silouanos, Simeon, Paul, etc. Peter of Sicily considers Gegnesios the Armenian as the founder of the Paulician Church of Achaie at Mananalis.⁷⁹ Eventually, these communities that never identified themselves as Paulicians, gathered in the Byzantine province of Armeniakon. Rivalries between two leaders, Sergios and Baanes, caused a schism. Sergios became the last heresiarch in Neocaesarea from 800/1 to his death in 834/5.⁸⁰ The disciples of Sergios called themselves and were known by others as *astatoi* or unstable, vagrants, vagabonds,⁸¹ and probably, as we shall see "brigands" or "bandits" on the entire stretch of the Borderlands.

Around the 830s, the *astatoi* of Sergios moved in great numbers to the Muslim side and were given refuge by the Amīr of Melitene. They settled in Argaoun and then in Tephrike where they also had their churches.⁸² They were essentially militant people and assisted the Arabs from Melitene to Tarsus in their expeditions against the Byzantines on the Borderlands, where Yahyā al-Armanī was stationed too for a while. As indicated earlier, these events constitute the background of *Digenis Akritis*.

The military phase of Paulician history begins with Karbeas and later on with his relative Chrysocheir (probably his nephew/son-in-law). Theodora made her move against the Paulicians as of January 842. In 843, the father of Karbeas was killed in these operations. According to Lemerle, Karbeas must have moved to Argaoun in the east in 843–844. As of 830s, the followers of Sergios had already settled there with the help of Amīr 'Umar Ibn 'Abdallāh al-Aqtā of Melitene. He believes that what is known as the Paulician State of Karbeas was established in 843–844.⁸³

Paulicians grew in numbers and were now the allies of the Arabs against Byzantium. According to one tradition, Karbeas was previously in the Byzantine army, but after the assassination of his father for harboring Paulician sympathies, he fled as the head of five thousand "other heretics" (or Paulicians) to the land of Amīr al-Aqtā. He even obtained audience at the court of the 'Abbāsīd Caliph in Baghdad, and was settled in Argaoun and Tephrike around 856. He was given a force of his own and provisions, and joined the local Arabs.⁸⁴ Tephrike became a Paulician stronghold. Karbeas was portrayed as a shrewd and cynical military figure, and one of the most feared enemies of the

Byzantines along Amīr al-Aqtā and ‘Alī Ibn Yahyā al-Armanī.⁸⁵ As usual, Gibbon has a humorous account of Karbeas and his career:

A Saracen emir introduced him [Karbeas] to the caliph, and the commander of the faithful extended his scepter to the implacable enemy of the Greeks.... The disciples of St. Paul [Paulicians] were joined with those of Mohammed....⁸⁶

Dissolute Michael III, Theodora's son, was defeated under the walls of Samosata. And Karbeas died in 863/4; Chrysocheir, a more violent figure, took over the leadership of the Paulicians. According to Gibbon, "in alliance with his faithful Moslems, and at the head of the servants of the Lord," he devastated Nicaea, Nicomedia, Ankyra, and Ephesus, the cathedral of which was "turned into a stable of mules and horses."⁸⁷

Considering Karbeas as one of the "famous Muslims" of the time on the Borderlands, al-Mas'ūdī places his death in the year 863/249H and refers to him as the *'baylaqānī*, the *batrīq* [lord] of the city of Ibrīk' or Tephrike.⁸⁸ Photius confirms the conversion of Karbeas into Islam,⁸⁹ but as of the eighth century, the motif of conversion was used for all heretics and cannot be taken literally.

Skirmishes between the Arabs and Paulicians on the one hand and Byzantine forces continued to 865.⁹⁰ According to the *History of Peter of Sicily*, Chrysocheir succeeded Karbeas in 863 and in 869 he led raids into Nicomedia, Nicaea, the theme of Thracians, and Ephesus. In 869–870, there were attempts to negotiate peace with Basil I. It was at this time that Peter of Sicily was sent to Tephrike for the exchange of prisoners. But soon in 871, Basil I personally led an expedition to Tephrike but failed to capture it. A year later in 872, Chrysocheir raided Galatea all the way to Kommata, but a counter attack drove him back. He was mortally wounded by one of his own men and his head was taken to the Emperor.⁹¹ In 873, Basil I moved toward the Euphrates and Melitene in 873, he then returned to "the country of the Manichaeans." It is not clear if the fortress of Tephrike actually fell at this time or continued for a while, because in 878 it came under another assault and probably fell.⁹²

Even though no record exists about subsequent Paulician activity, these factions seem to have moved to the southeast. Many may have joined the T'ondrakians, because the latter suddenly grew in number and power. Others simply followed the tide of events on the Border-

lands all the way to al-Shām. During the tenth to twelfth centuries, and later on, they were still at large in great numbers in eastern Asia Minor and the Borderlands around the Euphrates and further south.⁹³

Like several other scholars of the period, Lemerle too believes that the events on the eastern parts of the Byzantine Empire during the first three quarters of the ninth century left their marks on the Epic of *Digenis Akritis*. The heroes of these times, he says, were the emperors themselves, their generals, the Paulician leaders Karbeas and Chrysocheir, Muslim amīrs Yaḥyā al-Armanī the governor of Armenia, 'Umar, and many other figures on the Borderlands. The Armenian connection through the Paulicians, he observes, must be studied more objectively without negating them, as some have done.⁹⁴ In the Escorial version of the epic, Digenis is the grandson of Chrysocheir, and is brought up in a "Muslim family." He is a man of "two races," yet a native of a certain location and belongs to a certain culture and time.

Lemerle believes that the question about the "historical worth" or the historical realities of the epic is misplaced. The text is part of the studies of the period and locations on the Borderlands.⁹⁵ He also suggests that traces of these times must be sought in popular songs and poems too. Most of the controversy about the Paulicians and their history is caused by the absence of literature. They did have books and records, which however were systematically destroyed. Peter of Sicily says that he learned about the Paulician teachings of Sergios from the latter's writings.⁹⁶ No traces exist of these writings. Much later, in 1050s, Grigor Pahlawuni Magistros (over the theme of Mesopotamia and Vaspurakan) in turn mentioned T'ondrakian scriptures, which he read and then destroyed.

The subject of Paulician beliefs too remains unsettled. Sources do not coincide. According to Lemerle, Paulician teachings were based on "the direct reading of the Scriptures oriented toward assisting the faithful to pose questions." This free examination has bearing on many issues, such as the cult of saints. Sergios was a peaceful man and trained his disciples in the Paulician canons, not militancy, even though he was the enemy of the clergy. And just like the Apostle Paul, he voluntarily took up missionary journeys on his traces.⁹⁷ Concerning the Sacraments and other concepts, Paulicians did not reject them, but gave their own interpretations: Baptism referred to "Christ as the living water," the Cross was a symbol of his extended arms, the Church was the Paulician church, etc.⁹⁸

Peter of Sicily also reports that Paulicians were dualistic, they held two principles, an evil god and a good god, the first was the creator and sovereign of this world, the other of the future world. But the Paulicians were not Docetists, believes Peter. The latter believed that Jesus' physical body was an illusion, as was his crucifixion. As pure spirit, He could not die physically, therefore the sentence "the Word was made Flesh" (John 1:14) had to be taken figuratively. The Paulicians insisted that they were followers of the New Testament only.⁹⁹ In many respects, Paulicianism was a minimalistic faith, with no rites, hierarchy, images, clergy, saints, or miracles.¹⁰⁰ According to Peter, the Paulicans accepted the four gospels, the three letters of Paul, the Acts of the Apostles, and the epistles of Sergios; in other words, the New Testament more or less without the Apocalypse. Photius said that they detested the Apostle Peter.¹⁰¹

B. Digenis Akritis: Epic and History

The Borderlands was a finite world but with no definite boundaries with its own laws and value systems. Even though it fell off mainstream histories, as mentioned, it survived partially through epic and popular poetry. Just like all poetry and epic, the Byzantine epic of *Digenis Akritis* as well as the Arab epic of *Delhemma* (The Life of Amīrah Dhāt al-Himmah, mother of champions of Islam, of her son the Amīr 'Abd al-Wahhāb, of the Amīr Abū Muḥammad al-Baṭṭāl) have their peculiar historical significance and indeed shed light on an otherwise obscure period.¹⁰²

The tale/s of the hero Digenis Akritis, the Borderlands man of double descent survived in various manuscripts of different styles, content, and dates, some of which drew heavily on earlier literary topoi such as the so-called Alexander romances.¹⁰³ Still taken by many as exclusively literature, the historical investigation of this epic of the Borderlands was practically launched by Henri Grégoire in the 1930s. He was the first to try to identify the heroes and places of the epic with real figures and locations.¹⁰⁴ Undeniably, the Borderlands region is the context of *Digenis Akritis*. Indeed, one of the "facts" about the epic is that all its versions explicitly placed the heroes in "real" settings that are more or less recognizable to their audience and did depict and/or reevaluate "real" conditions. These are, one may safely argue, conditions and life during the ninth and tenth centuries on the Borderlands, hence the unique historicity of this text in medieval Near Eastern studies.

In line with this approach, “it must be recognized,” says R. Murray, “to what extent the whole Near and Middle East was a culturally hybrid world.”¹⁰⁵ For example, today, he adds, very little is known about the pagan cults celebrated in Syrian temples. The reports of the Christian writers are very general and contain little information. In turn, H. Drijvers asks whether one should look at the persistence of paganism against the background of a radical difference between Paganism and Christianity as distinct ways of life and worldview, or as a context for syncretism.¹⁰⁶ In Edessa, and a long time after Christianity was adopted, the pagan feast of Spring was celebrated.¹⁰⁷ Sun worship and Zoroastrian beliefs and customs were part of both Christian and Muslim religious cultures beyond the Middle Ages. Bardaysan (c. 154–222, Latinized Bardesanes) in Edessa was a Syrian Gnostic, follower of Valentine’s ideas, founder of the Bardaisanites, a scientist, scholar, astrologer, philosopher, and poet, was an “example of a Christianized pagan intellectual” with strong beliefs in astrology, the fate of the human soul, symbolical interpretation of traditional myths.¹⁰⁸ However, similar to the Paulicians and T’ondrakians and earlier sectarians from the second to the twelfth centuries, Bardaysan too considered himself a “true” Christian, not a heretic.

To the end of the Middle Ages, and in many locations syncretism dominated the Near Eastern scene; when Islam penetrated into Asia Minor, it too became another element in the making of this essentially syncretistic world. Much before becoming the Byzantine–Arab borders, the region from the Black Sea to Antioch, also east and west of it, was a haven for syncretistic and dissident communities. But still, the relationship between the *Epic of Digenis Akritis* and the history of the Borderlands region is controversial. Some, like A. Bryar, radically refuse to indulge into this aspect of the epic,¹⁰⁹ others like Nicolas Oikonomidès, Bart’ikean, and Adontz establish close connections, as discussed later.

In fact, the study of the epic began after the discovery of six manuscripts at the end of the nineteenth century. One of the subjects of controversy among scholars still is the historicity of the epic. Salthas and Legrand, the first translators of the epic, also earlier scholars such as N. Adontz and H. Bart’ikean and other Armenian scholars believe that “the identifiable figures in the poem are connected by family and by locality to a Paulician milieu.”¹¹⁰ Taking an extreme position, H. Bart’ikean sees an explicit correspondence between the epic and ninth-century Armenian Paulician and Arab history on

the borders.¹¹¹ According to S. Alexiou, “the Escorial [version of] *Digenis Akritis* contains a whole series of historical and geographical elements of great authenticity, some of which appear in no other Byzantine text, “such as locations, Isma’ili assassins, cities of Capadocia, Cilicia and the Euphrates.” Having said this, however, he totally rejects what he calls the “Armenian theory” about the Paulicians as “deficient in a sense of historical realities.”¹¹² But E. Jeffreys believes that there are indeed “several layers of historical reference, to periods ranging from the ninth to the early twelfth centuries—to say nothing of a dimly visible Hellenistic substratum.”¹¹³ Jeffreys adds that the “recollection of the Paulician wars of the ninth century was well imbedded in the *Digenis* material.” Names of Paulician leaders such as Sergios (Sargis) and Karbeas (Karapet/Karpis) are indications of Paulician involvement.¹¹⁴ Jeffrey’s perspective will be discussed further later.

The two major versions of the epic, the Escorial and Grottoferrata, show a good knowledge of Muslim life and culture, but not necessarily of military culture.¹¹⁵ The epic also shows a good knowledge of Christian life and culture because the Borderlands world was simultaneously Muslim and Christian, in addition to being a continuator of the pagan and Zoroastrian legacies. David Hook is one of the very few scholars who focus on the motif of Borderlands, the actual context of the Epic and the period. He argues that

The Frontier is an extremely variable concept The unstable and mobile frontier is more than the boundary between political states; it is more, even than a zone of military conflict. As the boundary between a Christian and Islamic world, it is a zone in which religious and racial elements are added to the political, cultural and linguistic perceptions.¹¹⁶ [Also significant on the Borderlands are] the hingemen and cultural commuters or ‘renegades’ like *Digenis*’ father of the Emir, common among whom may be individuals who transfer allegiance for amorous reasons. Only such a society of cultural contact could produce the striking onomastic mixture of the historical Abenamar who is, like *Digenis*, the child of a Moorish father and a Christian mother.¹¹⁷

The vocabulary and imagery in *Digenis Akritis* are other clues to its historicity. The motif of being “twin-born” is probably the most direct indication to the mixed nature of the populations of the Borderlands. *Di-genis* means “double-born,” tyi-born, or of double descent, of two worlds. The hero is the son of a Muslim father and a Greek mother,

both natives of the Borderlands. This is a very significant aspect of the text and directly indicates to the importance of the location, the Borderlands. The Christianity and the Islam of the heroes are aspects of the same syncretistic culture. Indeed, the heroes move between them by easy conversions.

Probably the best translations of two main manuscripts of the epic, the *Escorial* and *Grottaferrata* are made by E. Jeffreys, an authority on the subject. The *Grottaferrata* was first identified in 1879, and the *Escorial* in 1904. There are four other manuscripts too and none can be qualified as the original or the accurate.¹¹⁸ All versions however witness to a common original.¹¹⁹ In her Introduction, Jeffreys points out the problems involved in studying the epic. One of these is the continuity between ancient, medieval, and modern Greek civilizations and the significance of folk poetry in this respect.¹²⁰ The political context and specific historic and geographic references of the epic are other issues. There are also more contemporary issues, such as the position of women on the Borderlands, the culture of these communities, and their value systems. But from Karolidis onward, as of 1905, the poem has been linked to the Paulicians or similar groups on the Borderlands, whose voice has been absent from the historical record.¹²¹ Very close similarities between names and locations justify the link. N. Adontz and H. Bart'ıkean propose long lists of places and persons.¹²² Even though the epic lacks a common substratum to hold the various episodes, observes Jeffreys, many elements testify to the Paulician connection, such as names of the two Paulician chiefs Chrysocheir and Karbeas, their strongholds in north-east Cappadocia, their raids into the Christian side of Asia Minor (by the "amir," the father of Digenis), etc.¹²³

The story belongs to the ninth century, and the Euphrates and Commagene (east of Cappadocia) are the geographical locations. The buffer kingdom of Commagene ceased to exist in AD 72. Remnants of structures built much later, such as columns and tombs in these parts (Nimrud Dagħ, Gok Su, Diliktas) support local legends about a hero who was a Borderlands man and of double descent.¹²⁴ The heroes are frontiersmen and warriors, and Digenis is established as the best of them. There are also "guerillas" (*apelathis*) busy with hunting, women, and perpetual battles. There are also rebels and "brigands," who as distinct from the guerillas, are more militant and politicized. However, the distinction is not always clear. There are more marginal types too and they all coexist on the Borderlands, where ethnic and

religious differences are accidental.¹²⁵ In conclusion to her Introduction, Jeffreys says:

Stories about the legendary past, almost certainly in verse, circulated in the frontier areas of Cappadocia and on the banks of the Euphrates, some prompted by the massive architectural remains of the memorials erected by the kings of Commagene, others by the skirmishes endemic to hostile frontier situations. They coalesced around a lone hero of Arab-Byzantine parentage. Our evidence that such stories existed comes from Psellos' comments made in about 1080 on tales told of the Dukas family. At some point they were brought to Constantinople after the fall at Manzikert.¹²⁶

C. Digenis Akritis: Summary and Highlights of the Grottoferrata and Escorial Versions

The basic story of *Digenis Akritis* is more or less as follows: As mentioned, *di-genis* is “double-born,” “tyi-born,” boy of double descent. His father, the Arab amir, is the protagonist of the first part of the epic. He is the son of Chrysovergis (or Armenian Paulician leader Chrysocheir), who died in 878. In other words, as per the story, Digenis is the grandson of this Armenian Paulician leader Chrysocheir. But in the local tradition he was identified not only as an “Arab” but a Muslim too. His ethnic background did not seem to make much difference. His wife is a pious Muslim lady, who will eventually convert to Christianity as his son the Amir did (in order to marry a Greek girl). Paulician–Muslim history could not find more eloquent imagery than this case at least. Another character Karoīs/Karoīlis is said to be an uncle of the Amir and believed to be the Paulician Karbeas, who was a close paternal relative of Chrysocheir. Similar to Karbeas, Karoīs too is an ally of the Arab Amir of Melitene, who died at the battle of “Mel-lokopia” or Poson in 863, as we know. “Aphrike” of the epic is Tephrike, the Paulician stronghold. These and more cases are indeed intriguing parallels and it is not difficult to formulate a hypothesis on their basis, without insisting on a mirror-image theory (as Bart’ikean did).

A very handsome young man, the Amir fell in love with a Greek girl of high descent, daughter of the provincial governor on the Byzantine side. After defeating her brothers, he converted, was baptized, married her, and moved to the Byzantine side. The reference could be figurative, meaning being a pro-Byzantine. After receiving a letter from his pious Muslim mother in Raqqah on the Euphrates in central

Syria, he went there and brought her to Cappadocia, where she too converted and was baptized.

Born of the marriage of the Greek princess and "Arab" Amīr, in this case a Muslim/Paulician, Digenis too was a very handsome boy, who grew up at epic speed and became a brave young man. He passed all the tests of bravery and manhood by hunting and killing wild beasts and defeating dozens of her father's men. In turn, he too fell in love with and abducted a beautiful Greek girl from the castle of a prominent Byzantine man of noble descent. After another series of adventures and battles with the "guerillas," who seem to be heterodox Christian militant factions, he built a magnificent castle on the Euphrates between the two empires and became a Borderlands guard, an *akritis*. He never fought Muslims and indeed had respect for all. He died of a mysterious disease (or tetanus) at a young age, without leaving heirs; his wife died simultaneously. Leaders, prominent figures, and the common people mourned him and attended his funeral; his estate was distributed to the poor and his magnificent palace and tomb stood by the Euphrates.

Probably the only surviving testimonies of life on the Borderlands, the Grottoferrata and the Escorial, as well as the other versions of the Epic, reflect patterns and ideals of life which these heroes on the Borderlands shared. Theirs was a manner of existence, which simultaneously absorbed conflicts as well as affinities and generated a unique ethos, which by its origin perhaps, was bound to be uncommon and non-orthodox from the point of view of the orthodox institutions on the two sides of the borders. Attempts to nationalize these epics have so far distorted their unique historical significance. What distinguishes these epics is precisely the absence of ethnic and religious particularities and religious fanaticism. This was something that typified most Near Eastern heterodox trends. "It is difficult to see," says Mavrogordato, "how anybody capable of reading the poem from beginning to end" could be expected to trace nationalistic elements there, "seeing that the hero is *ex hypothesis* a happy fusion of Christian and Mohammedan blood. There is little religious fanaticism in the poem, and only the most perfunctory expressions of Christianity" and Islam as well. In all the epics of the time, including the Armenian *David of Sasun*, we find no "theological passion," as Mavrogordato puts it,¹²⁷ or a sectarian zeal for that matter. Instead, there is a passion for war, conquests, horses, wealth, hunting, nature, women, and love, as natural contexts for an independent life between empires and faiths.

Notes

1. Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī'l-Ta'rikh*, vol. V, 20.
2. Kennedy, *Prophet*, 124.
3. Ibid., 152.
4. Ibid., 156–57.
5. Ibid., 159.
6. Spuler, *Age of the Caliphs*, 1.
7. Ibid., 51.
8. Ibid., 52.
9. Michael Bonner, ed., *Arab Byzantine Relations in Early Islamic Times* (Great Britain: Ashgate Varorium, 2004), xxv.
10. Michael Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War- Studies in Jihād and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1996), 139.
11. Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, 140.
12. Ibid., 141.
13. Ibid., 97.
14. Ibid., 99.
15. Ibid., 101.
16. Ibid., 147.
17. Ibid., 138.
18. Bonner, "Introduction," xxvi–xxvii. Also see Oscar Martinez, *Border People* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, c1994).
19. Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, 137.
20. J. F. Haldon and H. Kennedy, "The Arab-Byzantine Frontier in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries: Military Organization and Society in the Borderlands," in *Arab Byzantine Relations in Early Islamic Times*, ed. Michael Bonner (Great Britain: Ashgate Varorium, 2004), 142–78, 156.
21. Ibid., 160.
22. Ibid., 161.
23. Ibid., 171.
24. Ibid., 177.
25. Ibid., 178.
26. Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, vol. V, 132.
27. Arshag Alboyajian, *Patmut'wn Hay Galt'akanut'ean* [History of Armenian Emigrations], 2 vols. vol. I, 28 (Cairo: Sahak Mesrop, 1941), 233.
28. Jordan Ivanow, *Pokomilian Girk'ern u Hēk'iat'nerē—Hatwacner* [Excerpts from Bogomil Books and Legends] (Sofia: The Bulgarian Academy, 1925), published in: G. Mesrob, "Bulkarahay Hin Gaṭut'in Cagumē [The Origination of the Ancient Armenian Community in Bulgaria]," *Haykaran* (Pavlovo-Sofia, 1931): 42–51, 47.
29. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. Carl de Boor (Leipzig: G. Olms Hildesheim, 1963). Also see Charanis, *Armenians in the Byzantine Empire*, 16.
30. Ivanow, "Excerpts" from *Bogomil Books and Legends*, 50.
31. For the history of the Muslim Armenians of Hamshēn see: L. Xaç'ikean, *Ejer Hamshēnahayeri Parmut'wnic'* [Pages from the History of the Armenians of Hamshēn], (Erevan, 1969); Petrosian, "Hamshēnahayer," *The Armenian Encyclopedia*, vol. VI, (Erevan: Haykakan SSR GA Publications, 1980), 119; Alboyajian, *History of Armenian Emigrations*, vol. I, 233.

- In this respect a book by M. Moosa is a very significant contribution: Matti Moosa, *Extremist Shiites: The Ghulat Sects* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988).
32. *Armenian Encyclopedia*, 12 vols. (Erevan: Haykakan SSR GA Publications, 1974–86), vol. I, 1974, 666; Garsoïan, “The Arab Invasions,” 135.
 33. See Aram Tēr Levondean, *Arabakan Amirayut'iwinnerē Bagratuneac' Hayastanum* [The Arab Emirates in Bagratuni Armenia] (Erevan: Haykakan SSR GA Publications, 1965), 257.
 34. Tēr Levondean, *The Arab Emirates*, 216.
 35. *Ibid.*, 221.
 36. *Ibid.*, 216–17.
 37. *Ibid.*, 224.
 38. *Ibid.*, 229.
 39. *Ibid.*, 227.
 40. Garsoïan, “The Arab Invasions,” 137.
 41. See Movsēs Dasxuranc'i, *The History of the Caucasian Albanians*, trans. notes C. J. F. Dowsett (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).
 - *42. H. M. Ut'mazean, *Siwnikē IX-X Darerum* [Siwnik' during the Ninth-Tenth Centuries] (Erevan, 1958), 61–62.
 43. See Ašot Yovhannisean, “Smpat Zarehawanc'i, nra Žamanakn u Žamanakacic'nerē [Smpat Zarehawanc'i: His Times and Contemporaries],” *Banber Matenadaran* 3 (1956): 7–30.
 44. Grigor Narekac'i, “T'ult' Amenašnorh vardapetin Grigori Narekac'woy zor Greac' i Hoyakap yAkanawor Uxtn Kčaway, vasn Karceac'n Anice-loy T'ondrakeanc' [Epistle of Most Blessed Vardapet Grigor Narekac'i to the Magnificent and Great Order of Kjaw Concerning the Beliefs of the Cursed T'ondrakians],” in *Girk' T'lt'oc'* (Tbilisi, 1901), xcii, 498–502. There is an English translation by F. C. Conybeare, in *The Key of Truth. A Manual of the Paulician Church in Armenia* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1898), A modern west-Armenian translation is in: Arsēn A. Goergizean, *Pawlikean-T'ondrakec'ineru Šaržumē Hayastaneac' Aiakelakan Ekelec'woy mēj* [The Movement of the Paulician-T'ondrakians in the Armenian Apostolic Church-From the Seventh to the Twelfth Centuries] (Beirut: 1970), 90–94.
 45. See about a detailed description in Yovhannisean, “Smbat Zarehawanc'i,” 15.
 46. The passage is from the “Epistle of Grigor Magistros to the Syrian Patriarch” subtitled: “Patasxani Asorwoc' i žamanaki yoržam ēr duk's i Vaspurakan ew i Taron zkni baṛnaloy n zManik'eic'n yašxarhēn yunac' ew i T'ontrekac' mnac'ealsn noc'a korcaneal azgn. Č'ok'an kat'olikosn Asorwoy i k'alak'n Amit, zi t'erews xabēut'eanb hawanec'uc'anen zna, zor na greal tuṭt i Grigor Magistrosn yAršakunin, ew ays ē patasxanin.” “Response to the letter of the Catholicos of the Syrians, Duke of Vaspurakan and Taron, concerning the activities of the Manichaeans from the Greek world, and the remnants of the T'ondrakians there. These T'ondrakians went to the catholicos of the Syrians in Amida, and tried to persuade him [in favor of their position]. Inquiring about the matter, the latter wrote a letter to Grigor Magistros Aršakuni, and this is the reply.” Grigor Magistros, *T'ult'k'* [The Epistles of Grigor Magistros], (Alexandrapol, 1910), 148–64.

47. Ut'mazeian, *Siwnik'ë*, 44–45; Mat. Archives 578, 67.
48. Ibn al-Athîr, *al-Kāmil fî'l-Ta'rikh*, vol. V, 128.
49. Ibid., 184.
50. Ibid., 237.
51. Ibid., 197.
52. Michael the Syrian, *Jamanakagrut'iwn Tiaîn Mikhayeli Asorwoy Patriark'i* [Chronicle of Lord Patriarch Michael the Syrian] (Jerusalem: St. Yakob, 1871), 364–65.
53. Bar Hebraeus, *Ta'rikh al-Zamān* [History], trans. F. Maurice Fiyeh (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1986), 27.
54. Ibid., 31.
55. Ut'mazeian, *Siwnik'ë*, 42; Mat. Archives # 578, 66.
56. Ut'mazeian, *Siwnik'ë*, 39–40
57. Ibid., 67.
58. Ibid., 54.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid., 35–37.
61. Movsēs Dasxuranc'i, *The History of the Caucasian Albanians*, trans. C. J. F. Dowsett (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 214.
62. Ibid.
63. See Ibn al-Athîr, *al-Kāmil fî'l- Ta'rikh*, vol. V, 234–46.
64. See H. Kurtean, "Babak ew Sahl Ibn Snbat [Babak and Sahl Ibn Snbat]," *Bazmavêp* 1–2, 3–5, 6–7(1958), *Bazmavêp* 1–2 (1958): 21.
65. Ibn al-Athîr, *al-Kāmil fî'l- Ta'rikh*, vol. V, 246.
66. Ibid., 288.
67. Movsēs Dasxuranc'i, *History*, 218–19.
68. Ibn al-Athîr, *al-Kāmil fî'l-Ta'rikh*, vol. V, 293.
69. Ibid., 297.
70. Ibid., 300.
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74. Ibid., 39–40.
75. Ibid., 52.
76. Ibid., 53–54.
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78. Ibid., 78.
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82. Ibid., 83.
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94. *History of Peter of Sicily*, 110–11.
95. Ibid., 112–13.
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107. Ibid., 39.
108. Ibid., 35–44, 38.
109. Anthony Bryar, "The Historian's *Digenes Akrites*," in *Digenes Akrites: New Approaches to Byzantine Heroic Poetry*, ed. Beaton and Ricks (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate/VARIORUM, 1993), 93–102.
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113. Elizabeth Jeffreys, "The Grottaferrata Version of *Digenis Akritis*: A Reassessment," in *Digenis Akritis: New Approaches to Byzantine Heroic Poetry*, 26–37, 27.
114. Ibid., 35.
115. Catia Galatariotou, "The Primacy of the Escorial *Digenis Akritis*: An Open and Shut Case," in *Digenis Akritis: New Approaches to Byzantine Heroic Poetry*, 38–54, 39.
116. David Hook, "*Digenis Akritis* and the Old Spanish Epics," in *Digenis Akritis: New Approaches to Byzantine Heroic Poetry*, 73–85, 75.
117. Ibid., 79.
118. Elizabeth Jeffreys, Introduction to *Digenis Akritis - The Grottaferrata and Escorial Versions*, ed. and trans. notes Elizabeth Jeffreys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
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120. Ibid., xvi.
121. Ibid., xv.
122. See N. Adontz, "Les fonds historiques de l'épopée byzantine *Digenis Akritis*," *Byzantion* (1929/30); H. Bart'ikian, "Armenia and Armenians in Byzantine Epic," in *Digenes Akrites: New Approaches to Byzantine Heroic Poetry*, ed. R. Beaton and D. Ricks (London: 1993), 86–92.
123. Elizabeth Jeffreys, Introduction to *Digenis*, xxxi.
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Armenian Dynastic Principalities or the “Age of Kingdoms”

I. The Bagratunis and Arcrunis

On August 26, 884, at Bagaran, Catholicos Geworg II Gainec'i (876–897) crowned Ašot Bagratuni as Ašot I, first Bagratuni monarch, with the support of the Siwnis and the Arcrunis.

The crown that the Arab *ostikan* was said to have brought from Caliph al-Mu'tamid (870–892) added nothing to Ašot's prerogatives and the Greeks never really recognized their vassal as a sovereign king. But the event had great moral significance for the Armenians at that particular junction in their history. Arab and Greek sources referred to Ašot as Prince of Princes, or simply as *Ashūd Ibn Sinbāt* (Ašot son of Smbat), as it appeared on his recently discovered seal too.¹ The Bagratunis did not have their coinage. Nominally Ašot had authority over the whole of *Armīnyah*, primarily entrusted with collecting of the taxes of the caliphate. He was a subordinate of the Arab *ostikan* in Partaw.

Before proceeding, a reminder must be made about the use of the word “king” during what is known as the Age of Kingdoms. The term *malik* in Arabic, *ark'ay* or *t'agawor* (transliterated by the Arabs as *ṭakafūr* or *ṭakfūr*) in Armenian, was widely used in the medieval Near East. It referred to the leader/master of a location, which could be a large area or just an enclave. For example, the Rubenid princes of Cilicia during the twelfth century just as the Shah-i-Armens were also called *malik*, or *Ṣāhib* (lord, owner) of their lands. Even Fāṭimid viziers used the term, like Ṭalā'i' Ibn Ruzzik, whose favorite and best-known epithet was *al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ* (the virtuous king). In other words, the term *t'agawor* and kingdom must be used with some caution. The so-called

kingdoms were essentially autonomous principalities and tributaries of the Caliphate or other parties, depending on circumstances. Otherwise, the naxarar system and political–military circumstances of the Armenian principalities at the time do not indicate any sort of territorial, administrative, and constitutional centralization.

Prior to Ašot's coronation, and probably to counterbalance Arab authority over the so-called Armenian king, Emperor Basil I the Macedonian (867–886) interjected himself into the equation. According to Drasxanakertc'i (Catholicos Yovhan V Drasxanakertc'i-Patmaban, or historian, 898–929), "he offered terms of peace, harmony and friendship to our King Ašot," whom he addressed as "our beloved son."²

During the remaining six years of his life, Ašot I consolidated his rule over Aršarunik' for a while and drove away the Jaḥḥāfī amīrs who had their emirates there.³ From the east of the Upper Euphrates, his domain stretched eastward across the central district of Ayarat to Lake Sewan and the borders of Vaspurakan. He annexed portions of the northern districts of Gardman and Utik'. His most difficult task was to control the Muslim principalities of Tbilisi, Theodosiopolis/Karin, Dwin, Manazkert, Xlat', Arčēš, Berkri, Naxijewan, Gołt'n, Aljnik', and Azerbaijan. These centers fragmented the land and impeded Bagratuni efforts to centralize power. Additionally, the Armenian naxarars pursued self-serving policies. They never or rarely presented a unified front; sometimes they supported the Bagratuni monarchy and at others they fought it.

After consecutive and failed rebellions, and the migration of many nobles during the last decades of the ninth century the lesser naxarar houses eroded. But on the other hand, in addition to the Bagratunis, the Arcrunis of Vaspurakan and the Siwnis consecutively headed dynastic principalities or "kingdoms." The age is usually referred to as the Age of Kingdoms. The Church supported the Bagratuni king, and as Garsoian observes, it seems that the "legitimacy bestowed on Ašot by his coronation at the hands of the *kat'olikos* [catholicos], rested upon the continuing goodwill and collaboration with the Armenian Church."⁴

In the year 893/4 an earthquake almost completely ruined Dwin, the seat of the Catholicosate and the Catholicos moved his premises to Vałaršapat (west of modern Erevan). Drasxanakertc'i relates these events and comments on the general deterioration of social conditions, the corruption of the clergy, the greed, arrogance, and incompetence of high-ranking officials. It was because of their insolence, he wrote,

that large-scale revolts rose against the clergy and monasteries.⁵ These troubles spread and grew in intensity during the tenth century and some of the next. Armenian dissidence, essential to the argument in this work, continues to be an integral component of these times too.

The conflict with the Arab emirates of Dwin and Manazkert and harassment by the Arab Sājid clans in particular continued during the term of King Smbat I the Martyr (890–914). The authority of Smbat I diminished and even though he inherited some of his father's prestige, he needed the support of Catholicos Gēworg II Gaṛnec'ī (876–897) and the other Bagratunis. His coronation at the residence of the Catholicos in Širakawan (or Erazgawork') was a political message to the other nobles as well as Byzantium and the Caliphate. According to Drasxanakertc'ī, by caliphal order, the ostikan of Atrpatakan bestowed upon him the royal diadem and ceremonial robes along with other presents. The event was the reconfirmation of the caliph's approval.⁶ Drasxanakertc'ī describes the circumstances:

Placing his kingdom on a firm foundation, Smbat tried to establish peaceful relations with everyone First, in compliance with the alliance of his father, he did not withdraw from the friendly affection for Leo [VI, 886–912] Emperor of the Romans [Byzantines]. He honored the latter with many gifts and worthy presents in accordance with his gentle temper. In return, the Emperor gave him an exceedingly great many number of gifts, namely, beautiful weapons, ornaments, robes wrought with gold, goblets, and cups, and girdles of pure gold stubbed with gems The Emperor addressed Smbat as his 'beloved son' by means of friendship.⁷

The ostikan Afshīn (appointed by Caliph al-Mu'tadid, 892–902) was alarmed and angered at the Armenian–Byzantine rapprochement. Smbat managed to convince him that his politics would prove to be economically beneficial for all concerned. After all, Armenians were vassals of the Caliphate too. Afshīn, who had advanced into Smbat's territory, withdrew to Azerbaijan, after the usual bestowal of gifts.⁸

For a while, Smbat's policy proved to be successful, but soon, on Good Friday, April 12, 892, he moved to Dwin, recovered the city, and dispatched the Arab commanders in chains to Leo VI (The Wise, 886–912).⁹ He also had the Qaysid amīrs of Manazkert, the Uthmānids, and the Zurārīs under some control. In 895, the Shaybānī Amīr of Ałjnik' attacked Bagratid Taron. In collaboration with the

latter, Afshīn moved in from the north. Smbat escaped to Bagrewand, the queen and heir to the throne fell captive, the treasures of the royal fortress of Kars were looted. Afshīn then marched to Vaspurakan, and the situation was totally out of control when the Qaysids of Manazkert rebelled. In 902, the three sons of Qaysid Amīr Abu'l-Ward of Manazkert attempted a rebellion against Smbat, one that failed. The Qaysids were subdued by Byzantium only after Smbat's death. In 907/8, torn between rivalries and dynastic disputes, Armenians were paying double tribute: 120,000 *dinārs* to the caliph and a lesser sum to the ostikan Yūsuf Ibn Abu'l-Sāj (901–919, 922–929),¹⁰ a brother of Afshīn.¹¹

The naxarars protested, but Prince Xač'ik Gagik Arcruni of Vaspurakan, already resentful of his uncle the king, set out to meet the Arab ostikan Afshīn in Azerbaijan. Indeed, he was granted a crown and became Gagik I Arcruni, the first king of the kingdom of Vaspurakan. The event was depicted in Biblical dimensions by his historian T'ovma Arcruni. The Arcruni Kingdom of Vaspurakan (908–1021) was eventually divided between the sons of Abusahl Hamazasp (958–968): Ašot Sahak took most of Vaspurakan, Gurgēn Xač'ik inherited Anjewac'ik', and Yovhannēs Senek'erim ended up at Rštunik'. Before the end of the century, in 983 the Bagratunis of Tayk' had their own kingdom and ruled Iberia too, where David Curopalate (983–1000) was the last ruler. As of 970, the Siwni kings in the east ruled over Siwnik' and Bālk'. There were minor principalities in Arc'ax-Xač'en (modern Karabagh) in the east, and the land of Abū Mūsēh in its south.

In 909, Sājid Yūsuf moved to the east and raided Siwnik' and some Bagratuni lands. During the next year, crown prince Ašot and his brother Mušel were murdered, King Smbat escaped to Kapuyt Berd (blue fortress) in Aršarunik', and was totally cut off from his compatriots as well as the Byzantines and the Arabs. The fortress did not fall, but Smbat surrendered to put an end to the conflict. Yūsuf however, decapitated him and exposed his body on a cross at Dwin. This ostikan initiated a series of forced conversions and persecutions.¹² The tragic circumstances of Smbat's death and the religious persecutions are narrated by Drasxanakertc'i.

Previously, in 909 the Catholicos took a bold initiative to go on a peace mission to Yūsuf with a precious load of presents from the treasures of both the royal and catholicosal palaces. Yūsuf first accepted the gifts but then changed his mind and kept Drasxanakertc'i as his

prisoner. The Catholicos was released against a very large ransom collected from many provinces. But in 926, when he attempted another embassy to obtain permission to return to his residence at Dwin, Naşr, a lieutenant of Yūsuf, reacted violently and Drasxanakertc’i barely escaped and found refuge at Bagaran. This Catholicos was constantly involved in politics, he even went to Constantinople for assistance, but the Byzantine condition to adopt the Chalcedonian creed left little margin for success.¹³ At home, King Gagik Arcruni, who too at that time had maintained a neutral position, had to finally react against the atrocities of ostikan Yūsuf and sided with the Bagratunis against the latter.

II. The Tenth Century: Prosperity and Turmoil

The tenth century in Armenia, and Siwnik’ in particular, was simultaneously the most prosperous and the most tumultuous. Architecture and the economy flourished. Arab rule continued but Caliphate armies began withdrawing after the Battle of Sewan in 921. Under Gagik I Arcruni (908–c. 943), Bagratuni Kings Aşot II *Erkat’* or Iron (914–928/9), Abas (928–953), and Aşot III (953–977), the country saw a measure of economic development. Yūsuf tried to raise another Bagratuni, Aşot *sparapet* as anti-king at Dwin. Within the first year of Aşot II’s term, in 914, Byzantium renewed campaigns for what it called the “Christian unity against the Muslims.” The King received an invitation to visit Constantinople; the Catholicos too was invited but excused himself because he was afraid that the move would be considered a step toward church union and antagonize the Arabs. In Constantinople, King Aşot II was received as a “beloved son” and granted the title of “Prince of Princes.”

Aşot II returned supported by Byzantine troops. The battle that followed (918–920) was in fact between the Byzantines and Hellenophiles on the one hand, and Arabs and Arabophiles on the other. It was known as the “war of two Aşots.”¹⁴ By a sudden reversal of policy, Yūsuf abandoned the anti-king Aşot and sent a crown to Aşot II. Displeased at these practices, the caliph summoned him to Baghdad. The new ostikan, who was more sympathetic toward the Bagratunis, granted Aşot II the title *Shāhanshāh* (ruler of rulers).¹⁵ The word *shāhanshāh* in turn is used in many contexts, and it does not mean king. Fāṭimid vizier al-Afḍal, for example, and others too used the term as their epithet. During these years, the Byzantine Emperor still looked upon Armenians as his vassals. Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus,

the Purple Born, or *Ciranacin* in Armenian sources (913–959), wrote in his treatise *On the Administration of the Empire*:

Since the prince of princes is the servant of the emperor of the Romans, being appointed by him and receiving his dignity from him, it is obvious that the cities and townships and territories of which he is lord also belong to the emperor of the Romans.¹⁶

The first three decades of the century in Siwnik' were probably the stormiest in the history of this region. Consecutive uprisings flared up during 900–920s, then in the 930s, and in the 990s.¹⁷ These coincided with similar events on Bagratuni territories. Part of the causes of the early rebellions at the end of the first decade of the century were triggered by the suppressive measures of Sājid Amīr Yūsuf of Albania, and the extremely difficult economic circumstances of the peasantry as a consequence.¹⁸ Previously, King Smbat I Bagratuni was himself a victim of Yūsuf's atrocities. Byzantium was indifferent, the Church was powerless and the naxarars were reluctant to antagonize the Sājids. There were other causes too, as shall be discussed.

The first protests rose when in the year 906 the Monastery of Tat'ew in Siwnik' acquired ownership of the villages of C'ur, Damalegk', and neighboring villages.¹⁹ Around 913–914, these villages rebelled in protest against the manner in which the Church acted toward the people just as another feudal institution. There was general discontentment at the failure of both Church and nobility to protect the peasantry and extend assistance to the needy, and generally the peasantry was weary of the corruption and the greed of clergy. The movement started from the village of C'ur, it spread and lasted to the end of the tenth century. It was ignited by a letter of anathema (*nzovagir*) by Bishop Yovhannēs (890–918) during the term of Siwni Prince Smbat (887–920), lord of Siwnik'. In the history of Step'anos Ōrbelean, a thirteenth-century chronicler, a chapter is devoted to the events of C'ur and Damalekk', and the attacks on the monasteries and the clergy. He relates that the rebels, or the "godless and lewd bandits" (*eluzak*) broke the silver basin of the *muṛon* (holy chrism) and smashed the cross.²⁰

The attackers, Ōrbelean says, were from the villages of C'ur, Damalegk', and Berd (or Aweladašt). They killed some of the clergy and plundered the monastery. Being away at the time, Bishop

Yovhannēs escaped certain death and moved the brotherhood of Tat’ew into another location. Dissident yet wrongly described as just “peasant” movements and assaults continued on the estates and properties of the churches and the nobility. Ut’mazean too finds that the rebels were not Nestorians or Chalcedonians or simply religious heretics, as claimed by the Church.²¹ Popular uprisings east and west of Armenia, including Vaspurakan and Taron were similar and part of the same general phase in Armenian as well as regional history.

The events of the tenth century had no precedents in Armenian history. There were internal disputes, divisions, and mutual accusations of heresy and/or corruption within the institution of the Church. Before the end of the century, the Monastery of Narek too in R̥štunik’, Vaspurakan, saw troubled times. Major theologians, Abbot Anania Narekac’i, his relative (niece’s husband) Bishop Xosrov Anjewac’i, and the latter’s son, the most prominent figure of the tenth century, poet-“saint”-dissident Grigor Narekac’i (d. 1003), were in turn accused of heresy.

For a while, the Siwni Prince Smbat and other princes left the region and then returned, took control of their estates and restored Bishop Yovhannēs, and renovated the Monastery of Tat’ew. A very strong anathema was issued in the 915 against the rebels who were not identified by any of the usual terms used for heresies such as Paulicians or T’ondrakians. They were simply called eluzaks or bandits. This is perhaps one of the most significant documents in Armenian anti-heretical literature, and generally in the history of Armenian dissidence. The document made it clear:

Anyone who stands in opposition to our orders and takes C’ur as the holy church [instead of the true church of St. Nšan of Tat’ew], or considers the Berd [the village of Berd or Aweladašt] as a fortress, let all those who do so be anathematized by God, by all the saints and ourselves.²²

When in 914 northern tribes, known as “Ruzik”s for their “strange and foreign appearance,” attacked Siunik²³ the rebels or the “bandits” and “rogues” [*awazakk’ ew srikayk’*] were said to have joined them in plundering.²⁴ The oppressions of the ostikan Yūsuf and the expeditions of the northern tribes complicated matters even further. As a consequence, the poor or the “lesser people” (*nuazunk’*) and the “slaves-servants” (*carayk’*) as Draxanakertc’i described them,

managed to acquire some wealth and importance, to the dismay of both the church and the nobility. He wrote:

Similar to the nobility, the *nuazunk'* tried to take initiative They began to put on shoes like their masters ride horses in a revoltingly arrogant fashion They appointed army commanders and governors from their own ranks. Brother rose against brother incitement, adultery and hatred spread they destroyed towns, villages and their own homes by their own hands.²⁵

Ut'mazean argues at length that the rebellions in Siwnik' did not have purely sectarian motives but were part of much broader social circumstances.²⁶ New uprisings flared up in 930s during the incumbency of Bishop Yakob of the Monastery of Tat'ew (918–958). Ōrbelean relates that the village of Aweladašt in the close vicinity of the monastery became a “bandit-center” (*awazakanoc*). Damalekk' in turn was a haven for the rebels, who “caused great distress to the brothers,” or the monks of the monastery, many of whom withdrew into nearby caves. Probably around 936, Smbat Siwni destroyed these villages and dispersed their inhabitants.²⁷ There was another rebellion in Siwnik' during the last decade of the century. According to Ōrbelean, Bishop Yakob II was assassinated by the villagers of C'ur,²⁸ and as punishment, their village was completely destroyed by “King” Vasak of Balḱ.²⁹

In the west, Ašot II Erkat' Bagratuni seemed to have secured the support of most of the nobility, of the Arcrunis of Vaspurakan, as well as of Byzantium and Baghdad. Despite his difficulties, he was autonomous as much as it was possible for a vassal to two empires. The condition had religious dimensions too: in the east, the 'Abbāsīd caliph was the successor of the Prophet and ruled the entire Islamic nation and empire, of which Armīnyah was part; in the west the Byzantine emperor presented himself as the image of Christ on earth and the protector and sovereign of all Christian rulers, with legitimate rights over their lands, including Armenia.³⁰

Byzantium was not too happy about Ašot's friendly attitude toward the Muslims. In 922, as a warning to both the Arabs and Armenians, Byzantine general Yovhannēs Kurkuas (himself an Armenian) was at the gates of Dwin. Ašot joined the ostikan in the defense of city but failed. After the Greeks left, in 923 Yūsuf returned and ordered the Catholicos Drasxanakertc'i to evacuate the see permanently and Armenians permanently lost control over Dwin. The Catholicos first

settled in Ayri Vank' (the Cave Monastery or Gefard), then in his own small fortress of Burakan, and then in the estate of anti-king Ašot Bagratuni in Bagaran. He died at the palace of Gagik I Arcruni in Alt'amar in 924/5 on Lake Van. As it was the custom, historically too, the naxarars always protected the Catholicosate wherever it was. The Arcrunis naturally did the same.

Only after the death of Yūsuf in 927, Ašot II gained some autonomy.³¹ Abbas I (929–952/3, the son of Ašot II's brother) moved the capital to Kars. At that time, the Bagratuni and Arcruni kingdoms were in their best condition. But gradually, as the Caliphate lost control and Byzantium advanced eastward, fragmentation started from the peripheries. In 934, Melitene fell to the Byzantines, who in 942/331 invaded Diyār Bakr, Arzn, and Edessa. According to al-Anṭākī, in exchange for Muslim captives, the Greeks took from Edessa the handkerchief, which according to legend, bore the imprint of Christ's face when he wiped his face with it.³²

III. The Ḥamdānids in Armenia and North Shām

The short period of Ḥamdānid rule in Vaspurakan and Ṛštunik and Ḥamdānid–Armenian contacts have not been studied fully. The Ḥamdānids (890–1004) were a Shī'ī dynasty that controlled the area from north Syria, Aleppo, to al-Jazīrah and Moṣul. They claimed to be the descendants of the ancient Christian tribe of Banū Taghlib from the north of the Arabian Peninsula. The most famous Ḥamdānid figure, Sayf-al-Dawlah (944–967) of Aleppo, carried his first large-scale campaign into Byzantine territories in 955.³³ Almost simultaneous to Byzantine operations, Sayf al-Dawlah was expanding into the Tigris. In 949–950/337H–338H he moved to Mayyāfāriqīn,³⁴ and in 956/344H he reached as far as the River Arsanas on the Byzantine side, facing the Byzantine armies.³⁵ The next year he was in Camndaw and put a siege on Ḥisn Ziyād (or Xarberd).³⁶ In 959/338H, when the Byzantines approached Diyār Bakr, Sayf al-Dawlah hurried there from Aleppo and the enemy withdrew.³⁷ But the fortunes of the Ḥamdānids were soon to change.

In 962/351H Byzantine Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (emperor in 963–969) and John Tzimiskes (or Yovhannēs Č'mšikik of Armenian descent, emperor in 969–976) were in Delūk, Ra'bān, Mar'ash, and Menbij and approached Aleppo from A'zāz in its north. They attacked the troops of Sayf al-Dawlah and thousands were killed in the battle. Phokas did actually enter Aleppo and after a week he

left for Constantinople with great quantities of provisions.³⁸ Sayf al-Dawlah could survive five more years and died in 967/356H. Phokas was in Adana and Ma'āşīşah in 964/353, and in 966/355H he was in Menbij.³⁹ In 968/357, he moved from Mayyāfāriqīn to Antioch and then to Ma'arrat al-Nu'mān, Ḥims, and Tripoli, spreading terror and burning down cities.⁴⁰ He then withdrew to the fortress of Baghras near Antioch and renovated it before returning to Constantinople.⁴¹ Byzantine forces were now established in northwestern al-Shām and the stage was prepared for broader operations.

In 964/353H, King Ašot III *Otormac* (merciful, 952/3–977) put an end to the Qaysids and took possession of their lands for a small period. The Daylamite Sallārīds in Atrpatakan tried to advance into Bagratuni territory but encountered resistance. According to a tax list of 955 preserved in Ibn Ḥawkal, the Siwnis of Vayoc' Jor (*Wayzur* in Arab sources) paid fifty thousand dirhams to the Sallārīds. He says,

An agreement was made with the Banū Sunbāt [or sons of Smbat I, the Bagratunis] for their districts of Armenia Interior, stipulating two million dirhams. They subsequently received a reduction of 200,000 dirhams. Sinharib lord of Khadjin [or Arcruni Senek'erim of Xaç'en] was taxed 100,000 dirhams and horses to a value of 50,000 dirhams.⁴²

In 961 the Bagratunis moved their capital from Kars to Ani and turned it into a cosmopolitan "city of thousand churches." During the terms of Smbat II (977–990) and Gagik I (989/90–1020), their land was still in reasonably good shape. The economy, rather than military conquests or a strong centralized administration, constituted the foundation of Bagratuni power. They owned villages, castles, and controlled routes, passages, and resources. Internally, the Bagratunis had some autonomy. The coronation of Ašot III in Ani by Catholicos Anania Mokac'i (946–967/8) was to reconfirm this fact. Even Dwin may have shortly returned to the Armenians between 957 and 966. But in 967/8, the large-scale Greek incursions to the southeast (during the term of Ašot III the Merciful, 952–977) radically changed the fortunes of the peoples east of their borders for the next century and more. This subject will be taken up later.

Ḥamdānīd (945–1004) expansion into Upper Mesopotamia and Aḷjnik' (around Mayyāfāriqīn on the Tigris) coincided with the reign of Ašot III. Another branch of this clan ruled Moşul (905–990). After a little over half a century in Aleppo, the Ḥamdānīds lost this province

and the city to the north Syrian tribes of the Mirdāsids. The ‘Uqaylid tribes in the same regions of northeastern al-Shām (990–1096) drove away from Mošul the Ḥamdānids into the west.

Ḥamdānid literary culture and poetry was a distinguishing mark of their short-lived north Syrian Arab principality. Al-Mutanabbī, one of the greatest Arab poets, for some the greatest, was among the closest friends of Sayf al-Dawlah and accompanied him to Armenia. Arabic poetry, one the oldest and most developed aspects of both pre- and post-Islamic culture, had penetrated Armenia prior to the Ḥamdānids. The direct and explicit influence of Arabic poetic forms and motifs on the literature of Narekac’i (himself from Rštunik’ just south of Lake Van) indicate to exceptional circumstances of interaction. Very little or nothing is known about these circumstances. Later on Grigor Magistros too, who knew Arabic, applied these forms. His literature and contribution are discussed in Volume Three.

King Ašot II’s son, Smbat II *Tiezerakal* or “conqueror of the universe,” (reigned 977–989/90) succeeded him, amidst sharp conflict between the Armenian princes and the Arab amīrs. Among these, the amīr of Goł’n seems to have presented a real threat to the Bagratunis and the Arcrunis, as well as the other Arab amīrs. According to Asolik, finding some interest in the demise of some of these amīrs, in 987 Smbat II concluded with him “a treaty sealed with an oath through the mediation of Lord Xaç’ik” [Catholicos Xaç’ik Aršaruni, 972/3–992] that they would live in peace with each other. This was a local military peace, and as soon as Smbat felt stronger, he violated the agreement and assisted the Sallārīds to recover Dwin.⁴³

Dawit’, the *curopalate* of Tayk’ (966–1000), the grandson of Atrnerseh II of Iberia, was one of the most distinguished figures of the last decades of the tenth century. His bilingual and bicultural Armenian–Iberian court became a cultural center. In return for his assistance to the Byzantine Emperor Basil II (976–1025) during the revolt of Bardas Skleros in late 970s, Dawit’ was given parts of Apahunik’. Like most cities that were in Muslim hands, Manazkert in this province remained in the hands of the Kurdish Marwānīds. But following their fall in 993, Dawit’ evacuated the Muslim population of the city and settled Armenians there. Before his death, and by orders from Basil II, he left his land as “inheritance” to Byzantium. Dawit’s so-called “will” brought the Empire back into the east.⁴⁴ After his death, when Basil II showed up on the Armenian borders to claim his inheritance, all the Armenian princes declared their submission to Byzantium.

The emperor moved to Theodosiopolis/Karin/Erzerum and stopped just before the Bagratid capital Ani.⁴⁵

IV. The “Crusade” of Tzimiskes and Armenian Settlements

Byzantine practice of acquiring Armenian principalities under the pretext of wills and inheritance was indeed the equivalent of total sovereignty over the dynastic *naxarars*. In general, the Byzantine emperors acted as though they were reclaiming what was theirs in the first place, hence their position toward the so-called “kingdoms” and Armenian autonomy. Tayk’ was the first of these cases, Arcruni Vapurakan followed in 1021, then Bagratuni lands in Širak in 1045, etc. Much earlier, in 966–968 the Byzantines advanced into Taron, in 969 they drove the Qaysids from Manazkert and took Cilicia and the entire province of Antioch and some of northwestern al-Shām.⁴⁶

The “*rūms* [or Byzantines] could take anything they wished,” says Ibn al-Athīr, “because the Arabs were in a state of fear and failed to defend the territories under their control.”⁴⁷ As the Arabs withdrew, and as per its policy of repopulating vacated locations by Christians, Byzantium transplanted Armenians and Syrians there. But at the same time, it kept these communities under constant pressure and persecution to convert to Byzantine orthodoxy.⁴⁸ In fact, part of the reason for these deportations and resettlements was to remove them away from their Church. Indeed, many in the military at least, converted. Chalcedonian Armenians came to be known as *tzatoi*, or *cayt’* in Armenian. The term seems to be derived from the Arabic *jāhid* or renegade, as there were also Muslim converts to Byzantine Christianity.⁴⁹

The role of Tzimiskes is vital at this junction in Armenian and Near Eastern history. According to Leo, he was a native of Hieropolis, and not a town called Č’mškacak, as it is commonly accepted. A small and handsome man of red hair and blue eyes, he was nicknamed Č’mškik. His native town Č’mškacak (home of the Č’mškik) was known after him; it was situated on the east side of the Euphrates, facing Arapkir on the west side, and in the northwest of Xarberd/Harbut. He was also known as *Kirie Yani* or Lord John, or *Tēr Yovhannēs*, according to Asolik.⁵⁰ Tzimiskes was also known for his preferential treatment of his Armenian compatriots. He particularly favored the Paulicians for their military prowess and long experience in Byzantine–Arab wars on the frontiers,⁵¹ and created a strong Paulician colony on the southeastern borders of the empire in the fortresses on the Euphrates, Aynt’āb, Menbij, and Delūk. The activities of these Paulicians in the

region of Antioch and their alliance with the Arabs alarmed the Syrian Church and upon the complaints of the patriarch of Antioch, he sent some Paulicians to the Danube, Thrace, and Philippopolis in Bulgaria. These Paulicians naturally began a new career in southeastern Europe. In her *Alexiad*, Anna Comnena complained of the hostile disposition of the Paulicians, whom she called the Armenian Bogomils.⁵² These uprooted Paulicians were notorious even during the twelfth century. Catholicos Nersēs IV Klayec‘i- Šnorhali or the Graceful (incumbency 1158–1173) drew close analogies between the Armenian Arewordik‘ or the sun worshippers of Samosata and the Bogomils of the Balkans.⁵³ Indeed, Bogomil history in the Balkans and its links with Armenian Paulicianism is a fascinating but understudied theme.

Around the year 972, Ašot III decided to divide his kingdom between his brother Mušel, who took Kars, and his son Gurgēn who took Tašir-Joraget, with the great monasteries of Halbat and Sanahin and new principalities or “kingdoms” were created. Despite his nominal superiority, Ašot III indirectly caused fragmentation. The Arcruni land in turn was divided between the grandsons of Gagik I. As seen earlier, Ašot Sahak was Lord of Vaspurakan, Gurgēn-Xačik of Anjewac‘ik, and Senekerim-Yovhannēs of Řštunik. In 1003, the latter assumed power over the entire kingdom.⁵⁴ Siwnik‘ paid tribute to the Sallārid amīrs of Azerbaijan rather than the Bagratunis. In the meantime, Mušel of Kars was joining hands with the Sallārids against his brother, Smbat II. The latter dedicated his entire career to the embellishment of the capital Ani, coexisting with the Armenian lords and the Arab amīrs.

Around the year 974 Emperor Tzimiskes led a campaign, rather a “crusade” into al-Shām. The declared objective of this expedition was the “liberation of the Holy City of Jerusalem from the infidels” or the Muslims. The naxarars rallied around Bagratuni Ašot III, and a force of ten thousand and other provisions were provided for the campaign that lasted a few months. In this context, the letter of Tzimiskes to Ašot III written in 974–975/364–365, after the campaign, is cited in Matthew’s *Chronicle*. It is of great significance and controversy concerning the claims and achievements of Tzimiskes and the significance of the expedition.⁵⁵

In his letter, Tzimiskes claimed to have conquered many locations in al-Shām, such as Ba‘albeck (in Lebanon), Jerusalem, Beirut, Jebayl, Tripoli, and other cities on the coast. In my opinion, whether he did actually enter and/or occupy these locations is secondary to the more important aspect of this episode. It is not the first time royal rhetoric

stretches itself beyond facts. What matters was what I call the “crusader spirit” in which the Syrian expedition was conceived and presented. The alleged fall of Jerusalem has little to do with the significance of the campaign as a “crusade,” but some scholars find a direct link. “To allow such an interpretation” [of the campaign being a crusade without the fall of Jerusalem], observes P. Walker, “means to accept Tzimiskes’ version as it stands in Matthew’s Armenian Chronicle.”⁵⁶ The point to be made is that military failure and/or change of plans do not change the motive and the propaganda of the expedition. These are totally different matters. The credibility of Matthew’s report is not the issue, what matters in the historiographic analysis of Islamic–Armenian history at that time are the motives, interactions, and mutual images in the medieval al-Shām and the Armenian condition in their midst. Furthermore, just as the *jihād* spirit was an aspect of the early *futūḥ*, so was the crusader spirit/pretext among Byzantine, Armenian, and other Christian rulers after the advent of Islam. For example, in the context of these events around 974 and prior to the arrival of the Franks, the most important issue was the massive entry of Byzantium next to the Fāṭimids and Turks into the stage of al-Shām. Before the arrival of the Crusaders, the competition was between the Fāṭimids and the Turks. At the time, Arab, Turkish, and Armenian elements too were involved in the politics of al-Shām. It is helpful for scholars to look at events from more complex and multidisciplinary perspectives as philosophers of history, and not just as detectives.

In south eastern Syria, Tzimiskes is said to have struck a deal not with Arabs but with the newly arrived Turkish pro-‘Abbāsīd Aftakīn. In other words, by 970s, the Turkish element was already working its way into the Islamic institution. Aftakīn was negotiating with the notables of Damascus, who were seeking protection from the urban *aḥdāth* (and not just the “gangs of youths,” as Walker describes them).⁵⁷ The futuwwa or urban youth coalitions—in Syria known as the *aḥdāth*—at the time constituted a major force to reckon with in Aleppo, Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, and most Islamic cities at the time of the breakdown of ‘Abbāsīd control.

When Tzimiskes arrived in Antioch to spend the winter, Tripoli, Damascus, and Beirut were at least partially and nominally under Fāṭimid control. He moved to the south through the valley of the Orontes and the Fāṭimids in the region withdrew to the east. Ba‘albeck was submitted—but not invaded—in May; Damascus, under Aftakīn,

submitted and agreed to pay a high tribute. According to Walker, Tzimiskes moved with his army from ‘Ayn al-Jarr/‘Anjar (in the Beqā’ valley, east of Beirut) to Beirut (under the Fāṭimids then), without entering Palestine. An arrangement similar to the one made in Ba‘albeck was said to have been made with Beirut. Tripoli was not taken and in the middle of June 975, Tzimiskes occupied some fortresses in the north, around Antioch. Other locations in al-Shām that surrendered to him were placed under the control of local Muslim lords.⁵⁸

As mentioned earlier, the letter to Ašot III was written after Tzimiskes returned from al-Shām and during his brief stay in the area. Irrespective of his success and/or failure, the Syrian expedition of Tzimiskes was presented in religious terms before and after its completion. Surely, these apparently religious motives were in fact political. From the beginning, Byzantium claimed and sought the leadership of a unified Christendom and this status had great political significance in its encounter with the Caliphate and the “liberation” of Jerusalem.

In his famous letter, Tzimiskes described a true crusade led by a Christian emperor into the Holy Land to conquer the “infidels” or the Muslims. From the first decades of Islamic expansion, the religious mission of royalty was part of the political rhetoric of Christian rulers, including that of Armenians. Even though both Byzantine and later on Crusader images of pious saviors of Christians in the Muslim world shattered, the synthesis of the sword and cross, monk and warrior was to shape the paradigms of Christian rule in the medieval Near East from Constantinople to the Caucasus, Cilicia, and Jerusalem. Upon his “victorious” return,⁵⁹ Tzimiskes poses as a Christian leader and addresses Ašot III as his “spiritual son” reminding him of his subordinate status in every respect. This is also a warning that in the new/old order, Armenians were still the vassals of Byzantium and that the Arab/Islamic era was over.

It is in this letter that we find the term “Šam” for the first and only time in the *Chronicle* of Matthew. Tzimiskes claimed to have “invaded the whole of Phoenicia and Palestine,” because, the “Africans” (or the African troops of the Fāṭimids) of the “arrogant Amir al-Mu‘minīn” (Fāṭimid Caliph Mu‘izz Abū Tamīm Ma‘add, 952–975) of “Arabic *Masr*” [Arabic Egypt] had arrived in the [Byzantine] “province of Shām.” Next, he mentions Antioch, Ḥimş, and Ba‘albeck (which he says meant city of *areg*, or sun in Armenian). He continues that Tzimiskes made a deal at Ba‘albeck and avoided the destruction of this beautiful city of colossal Roman walls and temples. After a tribute of

gold, young slaves, and animals, he says that he appointed a governor and moved to Damascus.

He also claims to have occupied Ramleh, Jerusalem, and 'Akkā in Palestine. The Sidonians managed to avoid conflict by "becoming taxpayers of the Empire and promising to fight its enemies," the Fāṭimids. He then describes the journey back through the coastal town of "Jibayl" or Byblos and "T'arablus" or Tripoli. The Syrian Shayzar on the Orontes was taken over and Armenians were settled there. Always according to the letter, the army continued its "victorious" return through the valleys of Sihun and Jihun in Cilicia. Tzimiskes occasionally mentions settling Armenians in the occupied locations and we know that it was during this time, as well as previously and subsequently Armenians were systematically brought into northwestern al-Shām. In sum, the expedition was presented as a primarily Christian victory over the "infidels" and the return of Byzantium into western and northern al-Shām.

As new Byzantine positions were consolidated, the westward and southward diffusion of the Armenians continued to the end of the tenth century. During the pontificate of Catholicos Xač'ik (972–992), the church had to appoint bishops for the parishes in Antioch, ÉarÉüé, and other places in Cilicia and North Syria. Both heterodox and orthodox communities were settled in the fortresses and other locations captured from or deserted by the Arabs. Anyway, large communities migrated fleeing from taxes, or religious persecution or simply seeking fortune in new places. The Borderlands became even more colorful and dynamic.

The move into Byzantine-controlled territories accelerated. Charanis says that "it was in the campaigns against the Arabs along the eastern frontiers that the Armenian contingents in the Byzantine forces stood out most prominently." Armenians in Byzantine armies played very significant roles and suffered losses as well in the wars of Kurkuas (in 923), then Melias or Mleh (during the capture of Melitene in 934), and Bardas Phokas in 954.⁶⁰ Among the prominent military men, Melias was perhaps the most familiar, about whom Charanis says:

Melias was indeed a great figure whose deeds were later attributed to Digenis Akritis, the hero of the Byzantine epic in which, as Melimentzes, Melias himself appears as one of *Digenis'* opponents. His son too distinguished himself as Domestic of the Schools under Tzimiskes. He died in Amida.⁶¹

In addition to leadership roles, the Armenian element remained prominent in the Byzantine armies.⁶² Even though the dynasties were

always Hellenized, there was a great number of Armenians in the Macedonian dynasty, as well as in earlier and later ones. Basil I, Basil II, Romanos Lekapenus (919–944), and John Tzimiskes (969–976) were among the well-known figures.⁶³ According to Charanis, “every emperor who sat on the Byzantine throne from the accession of Basil I to the death of Basil II (867–1025) was of Armenian or partially Armenian origin.”⁶⁴

Bardas Skleros, who revolted against Basil II in 976–979, was from the Skleroi of Peloponnessus, where the first known member of the family was governor.⁶⁵ A certain Armenian called Sachakios from the Varajnuni or Vrachamios clan assisted Bardas in his revolt. Of this family of military men came the famous “renegade” Philaretus the Armenian. Following the Byzantine defeat at Manazkert, he carved himself a career and soon a “federal” state in the region,⁶⁶ as will be discussed in Volume Two. The history of the Armenians in Antioch still awaits study. The Dalassenoi too may have been of Armenian descent. Damianos was Duke of Antioch in 995 and was killed fighting the Arabs in 998.⁶⁷ The careers of the Armenian chieftains on the eastern borders of the Empire and their interaction with the Muslims on the other side as foes/friends is a fascinating subject and will be dealt with in the next volume.

Overlooking the old Byzantine project of recovering the east, Matthew blames the Turks for the decision of Arcruni King Senek’erim to hand over his land to the Byzantines and take Sivās in return. He puts the early Turkish penetrations or “the first appearance of the bloodthirsty beasts the savage nation of infidels called Turks” into Vaspurakan in the year 467 of the Armenian era (1018–1019).⁶⁸ The image of the Armenian “kings” in Greek scholarship is indeed intriguing. Describing them as “chieftains” Charanis wrote:

In their relations with the Armenian chieftains the Byzantines developed the practice of yielding their possessions to the empire in return for lands located elsewhere in the empire and also for titles and offices. It was an effective way, at least in some instances, of extending the frontier eastward and at the same time integrating recalcitrant elements into the military and political life of the empire.⁶⁹

V. Basil II the “Bulgar-Slayer” (976–1025) and the Armenians—The Watershed

The tenth century saw radical changes in the Islamic world and society. The ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate broke into many dynasties and both

politically and economically the empire declined. But on the cultural and literary levels, great achievements were recorded. Works in Arabic literature produced during this period are listed in Ibn al Nadīm's (d. 995/385H) *Fihrist*. Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahānī's *Kitāb al-Aghānī* brought together all available works and lives of Arab poets.⁷⁰

During the tenth and eleventh centuries, the Byzantine Empire reached the apex of its power. The role of Basil II Bulgaroktonos (the Bulgar-Slayer), of Macedonian–Armenian descent, is usually taken to be pivotal.⁷¹ Byzantine cultural and religious influence spread even more widely. Nikephoros Phokas and John Tzimiskes had drastically expanded Byzantine military power into the eastern frontiers, but their large-scale operations had emptied the imperial treasury. Basil II also had to deal with two rebellions during the first thirteen years of his term (and that of his co-emperor, Constantine, his brother, both sons of Romanos II): the revolt of Bardas Skleros in 976–979 and the revolt of another general, Bardas Phokas in 987–989.⁷² After the suppression of these revolts, some military figures were given governorships.⁷³

Despite the military superiority of the Greek armies, the governance of Eastern Asia Minor was always problematic, even after the disintegration of the Caliphate in the tenth century. The population was predominantly non-Chalcedonian, there were many Muslims in cities and heterodox communities everywhere.⁷⁴ After 950, Byzantium established small border enclaves in Chaldea, Upper Mesopotamia, Antioch, Iberia, Vaspurakan, and smaller border themes called "Armeniaka Themata." *Doux*s were appointed over these katepanates, while previously they were governed by *strategos*. The Armenian Theophilos Kurkuas was the *monostrategos* of Chaldea in 950s. He was the brother of John Kurkuas, the grandfather of John Tzimiskes.⁷⁵

In the year 1000, Basil II gave the Marwānid Amir of Diyār Bakr, Muḥammad al-Dawlah, the title of *magistros* and the office of *doux* or Duke of the East, "a bestowal of honors on a Muslim that historians have struggled to explain." The Marwānids campaigned on behalf of the Byzantines and in 1009–1010 they provided Basil II troops for his campaign "to reinstall another Byzantine client family as emirs" in Aleppo.⁷⁶ Basil promised that imperial troops will assist the Marwānids if attacked.⁷⁷ The katepanate of Mesopotamia in the central sector of the eastern frontier was the most important in many ways.⁷⁸ Antioch was another katepanate. According to Yaḥyā Ibn Sa'īd al-Anṭākī, around 1012/402–403H, the Christians who

lived in Palestine under the control of the Bedouin Jarrāhids chose to move to Antioch and Laodikeia (or Latakiah, *Al-Lādhiqiyah*).⁷⁹ At the time, in North Syria and Aleppo, Basil was in direct conflict with the Fātimids, as shall be discussed in Volume Two.

Basil II never relaxed his efforts to expand the empire. In 1018 he captured Bulgaria. In the year 1000, Tayk’ or Tao was annexed as his “inheritance.” Bagratuni Gagik I the Great, the son of Ašot III, could maintain some control over his land for a while. Even before Smbat III (1020–1042) rose to the throne, Basil II demanded Ani and Kars. In the south, the Kingdom of Vaspurakan was transferred in 1021 and Senek’erim Arcruni moved with his nobles and a large number of his subjects to a territory around Sivās in Cappadocia. In 1024, the emperor was preparing to invade Sicily. The empire had recovered its size of the seventh century and the treasury had taken epic dimensions.⁸⁰ After twenty-five years, in 1045, during the term of Constantine IX Monomachos (1042–1055), Ani would become Byzantine territory.

VI. The Last Armenian “Kingdoms”

Ibn al-Athīr tells an incident of the year 1036/427H that seems to have some significance for the understanding of this period. It is a combined attack by the Armenians of Ani and Sasun on Muslim pilgrims from Khurasān, Azerbaijan, and Tabaristān, who were passing through Armenia and Xlat’. The Sasun Armenians, he relates, had a “pact” with the Lords of Xlat’, in accordance to which they were allowed control over the fortresses in their region, which they kept until 1185/580H. The Armenians killed many of the pilgrims and looted their caravans. When Naṣr al-Dawlah Ibn Marwān threatened to retaliate, the “king” of Sasun, “*malik al-sanāsinaḥ*,” wrote to him and promised to return the booty and the captives. The latter, adds Ibn al-Athīr, was afraid of the Armenians of Sasun, for they had inaccessible fortresses beyond impenetrable gorges. Besides, being in good terms with the Greeks, they could ask for their assistance.⁸¹ The last moments before the fall of the kingdom of Ani, the intrigues that faced young King Gagik II coincided with the first Ghuzz-Turkmen arrivals accompanied by Kurds in the region of Diyār Bakr around 1041–1042. These tribes were not conquerors but plunderers. The Seljuks called them their “slaves, servants and subjects.” Tughril Bek allegedly expressed anger at the news of Ghuzz atrocities in Armenia.⁸²

The tragic circumstances of the short reign of the last Bagratuni Gagik II (1042–1045), a twenty-year-old youth, his theological

speeches at the Byzantine court in defense of the Armenian faith, the “lesson” he taught to the Metropolitan of Caesarea and his dog Armēn, his encounters with the Cilician magnates, his exile and assassination in 1079 (in his mid-fifties) are told at length and on different occasions in the *Chronicle* of Matthew. Clearly, at least the Cilician princes felt that Gagik was their lawful king and that they had to take revenge for the annexation of the kingdom, the dispersion of Armenians and his murder. Matthew does not miss an occasion to remind his reader of the treachery of the Byzantines. For example, in his story of the appearance of Tughril in Iran he says:

In the year 498 of the Armenian era [or 1049-1050] during the reign of the emperor Monomachus, who treacherously and by a false oath eliminated the Armenian kingdom from the Bagratids, and during the incumbency of Lord Petros rose God's wrath from the land of the Persians at the behest of Sultan Tughril.⁸³

In reference to the events of the mid-eleventh century, he says:

I, Matthew a monk from Edessa many times I have thought to write about the bitter catastrophes of these past times, and the horrible punishments upon the Armenians at the hands of the long-haired and abominable *Elimnac'ik'*, that is the nation of the Turks, and their brothers the Romans [Byzantines].⁸⁴

Twenty years after the annexation of the Bagratuni kingdom of Širak in 1065, emperor Dukas gave the district of Camndaw to Gagik Bagratuni. All other principalities were almost extinct. Matthew also repeatedly speaks of Byzantine plots to eradicate the Armenian Catholicosate and annex the Church as well. After spending about four years in Constantinople, and receiving presents and high positions for his kinsmen, the last in Ani, Catholicos Petros Getadarj (1019–1058) was sent away. He did not return to Ani (which was now under Byzantine rule until 1065, when the Seljuks occupied it). He went to Sivās where the sons of Arcruni Senek'erim ruled and died there in 1058–1059. Xač'ik, his sister's son was consecrated as his successor. About the year 1060, Matthew relates:

The Romans contrived war against the Armenians in another way: they began to criticize their religious beliefs. Thus by insults, warfare, and combats, they sought to bring disorder into the Church of God During this time, Emperor Dukas [Constantine X Dukas,

1059-1067] conceived of the malicious idea of removing from Armenia the patriarchal see of Saint Gregory and destroying it.... of organizing persecutions especially after the death of his lordship Petros.⁸⁵

Matthew also relates that the Greeks persecuted the Holy See, and demanded that Armenians adhere to Chalcedonianism. He adds, “they also had their eye on the immense treasures of the Church.” Catholicos Xaç’ik II Anec’i (1058–1065) and his bishops were under pressure, they were summoned to Constantinople, then freed by the efforts of King Gagik II Bagratuni and the other nobles, and settled in T’awblur. The Catholicos died there in 1065.⁸⁶ “We have heard,” writes Matthew, that the Romans forced him [Xaç’ik] to submit to an ordeal of fire, which he passed through unharmed. The election of a successor to Xaç’ik is also told by Matthew. He says that the nobles “found a young man of Pahlawid lineage named Vahram, the son of great prince Grigor Magistros. He was consecrated as Grigor II, known as *Vkayasēr* or Martyrophil,” (incumbency 1065/6–1105).⁸⁷

Always according to Matthew, still pursuing his policy of either annexing the Armenian Church or eliminating it, Constantine Dukas summoned Arcruni princes Atom and Abusahl (sons of Senek’erim) to Constantinople to arrange or impose some sort of reconciliation. The Arcrunis took a certain *vardapet*, or celibate priest, Yakob with them. The latter argued in favor of the Armenian faith but his position was closer to the Greeks than to the Armenians, as Matthew told. Yakob drafted a text for the union of churches, which seems to have pleased the emperor. At the news of a possible union, and as still the head and the guardian of the nation, King Gagik II arrived in Constantinople to take matters in his own hands.⁸⁸ ‘Gagik himself wrote a profession of faith [of the Armenian Apostolic Church] and presented it to the emperor and the patriarch,’ says Matthew (and cites a text of about ten pages).⁸⁹ On his return home Gagik intentionally passed through Caesarea, where he staged the killing of the Metropolitan Markos known for his hatred of Armenians, by the Metropolitan’s own dog, named Armēn (by putting him and the dog in a sac and beating them). Gagik’s men also plundered the city, tortured some inhabitants and left.⁹⁰

Matthew relates that during the year 1066/7 a new and formidable figure appeared in Cappadocia along and as part of Turkish expansion. He was “a very illustrious and mighty *amīr* called Gumuštikin.

He was Alp Arslan's *ḥājib* [chamberlain] and came forth from the sultan's court against the Christians." Slaughtering everyone on his way, he passed through Edessa and Nisibis, crossed the Euphrates and invaded Hiṣn Maṣṣūr.⁹¹ Gumuštikin. was in fact a Georgian–Armenian who founded the Dānishmandid dynasty in Sivās, Caesarea, and Melitene, as will be seen in Volume Two.

Despite their efforts, even before the fall of the Bagratids of Ani and the exodus of the naxarars, the Byzantine armies began losing battles. Earlier on, in 1031/2, an expedition to north Syria near A'zāz led by Romanos III Argyros (1028–1034) was completely destroyed and the emperor barely escaped.⁹² Edessa and the cities and the fortresses of the Euphrates became battlefields creating precarious conditions on the eastern borders. Otherwise, the consequences of Byzantine policy of annexation of Armenian districts and kingdoms were disastrous not only for the Armenians, but the entire region after the arrival of the Ghuzz tribes, or simply the "Muslims" as Matthew describes them, on the borders of Aḷuank' around 1030 (according to Ibn al-Athīr).⁹³

The tenth and eleventh centuries—called the Age of Kingdoms—are also considered the first or the early Armenian renaissance. The gradual weakening of the kingdoms did not affect the massive advancements in culture and social life. The period saw the growth of cities and the urbanization of social life and culture. The process inevitably led to closer interaction with Islamic culture, because previously and in general, Armenians of all classes had avoided cities, to the point of being "anti-urban," as Redgate puts it.⁹⁴ Economic prosperity contributed to the beginnings of Armenian monasticism. Haḷbat, Sanahin, Hoṛomos, and Narek were established during this period. Religious debates and perpetual uprisings did not prevent the opening of new monasteries. The incumbency of Catholicos Anania Mokac'i (940s–967) saw the most serious debates and accusations, in which Grigor Narekac'i, his father and great uncle before him were directly involved. These three figures must also be studied in the context of these debates.

VII. Reformist-T'ondrakian Episodes—1000–1054/5

Parallel to these events in Armenia and the entire region, the first half of the eleventh century saw widespread reformist and dissident uprisings. Less than a century after the rebellions in Siwnik', and as related by the chronicler Aristakēs Lastivertc'i, during the first years of the century Apahunik' (the province of Hinis or Xnus) and Daranali

in the northwest, were stages of similar uprisings and assaults on the churches and monasteries. These rebels or dissidents were commonly described as T'ondrakians. Almost 160 years after the execution of Smbat Zarehawanc'i in Apahunik', this was the third explicit reference to T'ondrakians, the second being by Grigor Narekac'i in his famous Epistle to the dissident Abbot of the Monastery of Kjaw. While the epistle dealt primarily with the doctrinal and moral aspects of the T'ondrakians, the accounts of Aristakēs depicted large-scale religious–social revolts in which the peasantry as well as the clergy and nobility, even Byzantium were involved. Indeed, at the end of this T'ondrakian episode, Byzantine appointed Duke of Mesopotamia Grigor Pahlawuni-led military campaigns against the T'ondrakians between the years 1051 and 1054. This and few other works of Magistros are some of the few but very important sources on these events.

Aristakēs, the only source on this period, speaks of two sets of events during the first few years of the eleventh century: a reformist movement within the Church led by Bishop Yakobos of Hark', and a broader movement that involved the Church, the nobility, and the peasantry. Bishop Yakobos, the leader of the reformists within the church in Hark', was said to be an ascetic and saintly figure surrounded by sympathizers/followers who emulated him. But according to Aristakēs, the character and virtues of Yakobos were “mere appearances” and “shrewd deception” to mislead the public and conceal the heretical nature of his teachings.

The core of the matter is that Yakopos was nothing but a staunch critic of the Church, its practices, doctrines, and incompetent and corrupt clergy in particular. In the churches under his jurisdiction, he introduced many reforms, which caused the discontentment of the authorities. Aristakēs gives details about these reforms. Yakobos chose the “worthiest” among the priests and allowed them to perform mass only three times a year. The “unworthy” were condemned to silence and were isolated. Without going into details, Aristakēs implies that similar to all other sectarians, Yakopos too believed and preached that the only way to seek God's grace was repentance and direct prayer, everything else was futile and fake.⁹⁵ Consequently, the mediating roles of the church and the clergy were considered superfluous and harmful. He canceled many customs such as the sacrifice of animals, donations to clergy, etc. Other practices to assist man's salvation, as set by the church for centuries, were banned too. Yakobos refused to give communion to members of the community because, as Aristakēs

reports, “if the sinner did not repent himself, neither sacrifice nor mass could help him to attain salvation.” He and his followers ridiculed those who slaughtered animals as offerings, and addressed the poor beast saying “O wretched animal, if he [the sinner] went astray and deserved death, what sin have you committed to die for him?”⁹⁶

According to Aristakēs, these T’ondrakians adopted an ascetic style of life and refused to surrender or betray their teacher/leader, even under threats and harsh punishment.⁹⁷ Similar accounts of solidarity and secrecy about the whereabouts of leading figures and each other were reported by Magistros fifty years later in the same locations. After being summoned to two church councils, which he declined to attend, Yakobos was betrayed by one his followers, a certain Esayi from Erzerum. He was brought before Catholicos Sargis Sewanc’i (992–1016), accused of heresy, branded by the fox sign, and thrown into prison. He managed to escape and was said to have resorted to the village of T’ondrak in Apahunik, “the den of the beasts,” says Aristakēs, where his followers lived in farms and distant places, and spent his last days in Mayyāfāriqin.⁹⁸ Repeating the motif of conversion, some sources mention his conversion to Islam.

This was a brief account of the episode of Yakobos in which not only the Armenian Church but Byzantine officials too were involved. Obviously, the reformist attitudes and measures of Yakobos were just part of a much larger dissident movement that stormed the Armenian world for two centuries, from the ninth to the eleventh centuries. The monastery of Narek and other orders were involved, and what many seem to have missed, is that Yakobos was an exact contemporary of Grigor Narekac’i, and their doctrinal attitudes and religious ethics were almost identical. Like Yakobos, Grigor, his father Xosrov, and great uncle Anania, were in turn accused of heresy. There are close links between the circumstances of Yakobos and Narekac’i, the timing, the style of the accusations addressed to them. They indicate to a broader context of events during the tenth century in most parts of the Armenian world and in the institution of the Church itself.

A second series of events occurred in Mananaḻi during the first decade of the eleventh century, as told in the *History* of Aristakēs.⁹⁹ At the center of these uprisings was the monk Kuncik whose closest associates and co-heresiarchs were said to be ladies from the nobility, Hranuš and two sisters called Axni and Qamara. Aristakēs does not mention their family backgrounds, but these nobles had estates and villages in the province. He says that a prince named Vrvei, probably

from the same locations, in turn converted to the T’ondrakian heresy and became the “obedient brother” of these princesses. Jointly, these aristocrats spread their teachings and provided financial support for their followers. The two sisters donated their villages of Kashē and Ałusoy to the rebellious factions. Prince Vrvēr in turn, withdrew his generous contributions to the church, evacuated the priests, and brought in the rebels.

The economic support of the nobles provided means of survival and regulated the life of these communities in Mananali. According to Aristakēs, the “heretical rebels” attacked the local churches and monasteries. They destroyed the famous cross of the village of Bazmałbiwr near Kashē and Ałusoy. The story is almost identical to the events of C’ur and Damalekk’ in Siwnik’ less than a century earlier. Mutual acts of violence followed and a Byzantine royal delegate was dispatched as arbitrator and judge. Aristakēs concludes by the story of the painful death of Prince Vrvēr (probably of leprosy). He adds that “fear of misleading innocent minds” he refrained from describing the beliefs and practices of these heretics. However, repeating common accusations addressed to all heretics, from the Eustathians, to Paulicians, and the followers of Zarehawanc’i, he said that these “T’ondrakians” rejected the Church, its canons, Baptism, Communion, Holy Mass, the cross and fasting, and had a silent and artless way of praying outside churches in contrast to the ceremonious way in which the true faithful raised their songs and prayers to God.¹⁰⁰ As resentment grew, more violence was committed says Aristakēs, “between the two halves” of the population, and both sides included members of all classes.¹⁰¹

There can be no clearer statement about the dimensions of these events. This is the most intriguing information in the story of Aristakēs. Himself a man of the Church, he was probably trying to balance the situation. It is clear that at least “half” the population followed the so-called T’ondrakian heresy and stood apart from and against the other half led by the Church. Furthermore, all classes were involved in the reformist movements, in Siwnik’ and Vaspurakan in the east, and Upper Mesopotamia and Taron in the west. Systematically dismissed and marginalized as a heresy, T’ondrakism was one of the most intriguing aspects of Armenian dissident culture. The history of Armenian Christianity must be re-considered in this light.

Reformist movements continued and gained momentum. In 1051, Grigor Pahlawuni (d. 1058/9) the Byzantine-appointed Magistrate (or

Magistros), Duke of the Theme of Mesopotamia and Vaspurakan, was ordered by Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos, whom he highly praised, to clear the entire area of these rebels. Military operations against the enemies of the Armenian Church and Byzantium constituted the highlights of the political career of Magistros. At least three other Pahlawunis would be involved with dissidents later on. They were his son Catholicos Grigor Vkasasēr (Martyrophil), his grandson Vahram or Bahrām (d. 1140) the vizier of Fātimid Caliph al-Ḥāfiẓ in 1135–1137, and Catholicos Nersēs IV Klayec’i Šnorhali (1166–1173), a great-grandson. As part of the Byzantine project of annexation, the Pahlawunis too had been evacuated from their home estates in Bjni and given territories in Upper Mesopotamia and north Syria in exchange. In a letter to the Syrian Patriarch, Magistros described the theme of Mesopotamia (*Mijagetk’*) as part of the “holy Byzantine Empire” and himself as the emperor’s “representative” and admirer in every sense. The sects will not be allowed, he said, to spread their teachings on imperial territories. He bluntly held the patriarch personally responsible for any blood that might be spilled as a consequence of negligence, and defiance of orders not to support or give refuge to the heretics. The letter ended in a stern warning: “Abolish their name, literature and activity, otherwise, you will find yourself facing divine wrath.”¹⁰²

Much of what we know about T’ondrakian-related events during the middle of the eleventh century is based on the epistles of Magistros. In a reply to a letter addressed to him by the Syrian Patriarch concerning the “deceitful T’ulaylians,” Magistros says that these were the “remnants” of the Manicheans and T’ondrakians.¹⁰³ It is in these letters that we learn about seven T’ondrakian heresiarchs, Thodros, Ananēs (Ananias), Ark’ay, Sargis, Kuregh, Yesu, and the “red-haired dog Łazar.”¹⁰⁴ Similar to Smbat Zarehawanc’i, these figures claimed to be “priests” without being ordained by the Church, as Magistros put it, and simply wanted to “eliminate all functions of the clergy.” Smbat taught them to refuse all the sacraments, ritual, and ordinations by the higher clergy, and considered them frauds designed to “deceive the populace,” while he himself thrived on “falsity, vainly claiming to be high-priest.”¹⁰⁵ Indirectly confirming the rapport these heresiarchs managed to establish with a wide public, and their success, Magistros warned, that their “words were smooth as olive oil but lethal as arrows.”¹⁰⁶

The movements and the literature of the T’ondrakians did not seem to be easily detectable or traceable. Like the Pythagoreans, said

Magistros, some of the T'ondrakians would commit suicide rather than betray their fellow sectarians. By pleasant manners and “sweet speech” they misled and deceived the investigators, and it was through spies that the men of Magistros were led to their strongholds. Following the flow of “contaminated waters I reached the source in T'onrak” (just south of Manazkert), said Magistros, where “the fire of the evil heresy raged” in their temple. By “divine providence” and faithful to the legacy of his ancestor (Grigor the Illuminator, whose descendants the Pahlawuni claimed to be), he continues, “I eradicated the seeds of evil and heresy” during the reign of Emperor Constantine Monomachos.¹⁰⁷ Two informers, Polikarpos and Nikanor led Magistros to the “*šnavank*” (dog-habitats, as heretics were traditionally called dogs by Byzantine authors). He relates that there lived “men clad as priests and multitudes of whorish women.” He proudly declares that he confiscated, read, and then destroyed their literature. Many villages were burnt and the inhabitants evacuated.

I drove them outside the Byzantine borders into north Asorik' [Syria] without inflicting any bodily harm to anyone, even though the law stipulated capital punishment while others killed the old and the young without mercy branded them with the fox sign and some blinded them.¹⁰⁸

An erudite nobleman, who was more or less familiar with philosophical and other intellectual trends of the Hellenistic world, Magistros identified three trends among the T'ondrakians of his time: the first group was similar to the Epicureans, they were “most evil” and atheistic. They taught hopelessness and were “capable of taking deadly poison and ending their own lives.” The second group cursed the Manichaeans, but was in fact identical with them both in deeds and thoughts. The last and largest group claimed to be “Christian Armenians.” They lived in mixed communities, their bishops and priests were not ordained by the Armenian Church, and they adhered to distorted beliefs which had nothing in common with the orthodox [*uṭṭap'ar*] faith. Even though they claimed to be “true Christians,” he says, they were nothing but “dogs” (repeated thrice).¹⁰⁹ Like the earlier sects, he said, they were all adoptionistic, and rejected the divinity of Christ.¹¹⁰ The military operations of Magistros failed to eradicate dissidence and instead contributed to its expansion into the east and south, Cilicia and North Syria. Dissidence metamorphosed in a variety of manners, as shall be discussed later.

It is very important to note that Armenian sources on sectarian-related events and issues, Eznik, Ōjnec'ī, Narekac'ī, Aristakēs, Magistros, Taronec'ī, Šnorhali, Tat'ewac'ī, and others, grant and specifically trace a trend from the earliest periods of Christianity both in Armenia and the region to their own times. Połos Taronec'ī (d. 1123), for example, saw the T'ondrakians of his time as just part of the same phenomenon that started from the ancient Manichaeans, Marcionites, Mcñeans, Paulicians, and T'ondrakians of the ninth to eleventh centuries. In his *History of Caucasian Albanians* Movsēs Kałankatwac'ī-Dasxuranc'ī in turn traced close links between sectarian unrest and peasant uprisings in the east and west. He spoke of alliances between dissident Armenians and the Khurramid Babakians.

It seems that common doctrines and history between the Armenian and Muslim sects was first suggested by W. Ivanow. He considered Paulicianism as one of the elements, which constituted the doctrines of the Ahl-i Haqq or the Truth-Worshippers of Kurdistan in the twelfth century. He pointed out "strong and comparatively recent traces of Christian beliefs, which may perhaps be recognized as akin to the Paulician or Thontrakian sectarianism in Upper Mesopotamia and Armenia in the medieval period."¹¹¹ Based on similarities of beliefs and practices,¹¹² he suggested that Christian and other non-Muslim elements in the faith of this 'Alid sect were primarily Paulician. In his Introduction there is a very interesting remark about a certain Sult'an Sahak, one of the five incarnations of 'Alī, the "real founder of the sect."¹¹³ There are two other figures in Ahl-i Haqq theology, Bahus and Benyamin. Ivanow explains:

It is noteworthy that Sahak can only be an Armenian form of Islamic name Ishaq or Isaac. Similarly Bahus is obviously the Armenian name Bołos, Paul. Benyamin is also an Armenian form of Benjamin, and we may add Nuy or Nūh, Noah, also of the same origin. Thus we apparently have to deal here with comparatively fresh traces of an Armenian, perhaps Thonraki, or generally Paulician phase in the evolution of the tribal milieu in which the Ahl-i Haqq sect sprang.¹¹⁴

Ivanow strongly suggests that some Paulician/T'ondrakian communities which eventually embraced Islam, like the Hamšēnians, carried their faith with them into new syncretistic sects in the remote mountainous areas of eastern Asia Minor. To support the case that several surviving tribes preserved their Paulician origins, he brings

an account by E. S. Soane about a certain Balakī tribe in the district of Darsīm. This tribe, he says, ‘lived among Kurdish and Zaza tribes and its members spoke a language, which was a mixture of Kurdish, Armenian and Arabic.’¹¹⁵

A more recent author, M. Moosa also traces racial affinities between the heterodox Armenian and Turkish factions in the same locations as mentioned by Soane and Ivanow. He discusses at length “Armenian elements” between the beliefs the Armenian Paulicians-T‘ondrakians and the Qizilbashīs-Bekdashīs of Asia Minor. In fact, Moosa identifies the latter two sects and says that in some parts of modern Turkey the so-called Alawīs (or Alewis, worshippers of ‘Alī) are indeed these “extreme Shī‘ite” Kurdish sects.¹¹⁶ According to the travel notes of C. Wilson, some of these Kurdish tribes are descendants of well-known Armenian families, such as the Mamankali Kurds from the Mamikoneans.¹¹⁷ He even suggests that the Qizilbashīs “retain certain Christian practices and sometimes call themselves Christians.”¹¹⁸ According to Moosa, they also show great respect for Armenian churches and relics.¹¹⁹

The most interesting piece of information in this context comes from Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī. According to him, “the inhabitants of Erzinjān in the upper Euphrates valley were Armenians, and there were some Muslims among them.”¹²⁰ Ibn Baṭṭūṭa visited the city in 1330 and says that most of the inhabitants were Armenian Muslims, there were Turks too in the city, who spoke Turkish.¹²¹ Moosa, as well as the other authors mentioned earlier clearly suggest close interactions between Armenian and Muslim heterodox trends. They also allude to syncretism in all cases, but the issue is more complicated than pointing to similarities and mutual influences. What the evidence suggests, as a very probable hypothesis, is the following: there is something one can call a “Near Eastern popular and syncretistic religious culture.” It grew out of early Syriac-Adoptionist trends, always maintained some pagan-Zoroastrian elements and evolved by adopting concepts and practices from Manicheism, Mithraism, and surely Islam—and Shī‘ism in particular—when it came into the stage. Armenian, Kurdish, Persian, and other sects are parts of this large transnational phenomenon. By its roots, this syncretistic religious culture and its practices had to be popular, extra-establishment, and involve the marginal communities and rebels among the Armenians, Kurds, Persians, and others. In other words, it is not a matter of who influenced who, Islam influenced Armenian Christianity as much the latter did Muslim syncretistic trends in Asia Minor. To avoid Ottoman persecutions and massacres,

Armenian communities in isolated mountainous areas adopted Kurdish identities, retaining some of their original faith. These aspects of Near Eastern history survived in travelers' notes and oral history. The essential is to develop historic paradigms to define the historicity of seemingly isolated accounts.

Notes

1. Garsoïan, "Independent," 148.
2. Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc'i, *History of Armenia*, trans. G. H. Maksoudian (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987), 129.
3. Garsoïan, "Independent," 147.
4. Ibid., 149–50.
5. Lang, *Armenia Cradle of Civilization*, 183.
6. Drasxanakertc'i, *History*, 132.
7. Ibid., 137–38.
8. Garsoïan, "Independent," 152.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., 156.
11. See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī'l-Ta'rikh*, vol. VI, 135.
12. Garsoïan, "Independent," 157–58.
13. Mahé, "Le rôle et la fonction du catholicos," 100.
14. Ibid., 159.
15. Ibid., 160.
16. Ibid., 161.
17. Ut'mazean, *Siwnik'ë*, 252.
18. Ibid., 252–53.
19. Ibid., 256.
20. Step'anos Ōrbelean, *Patmut'awn Nahangin Sisakan* [History of the Province of Siwnik'] (Tbilisi: N. Aghanian Press, 1911), 20. The English translation: Step'anos Orbelean, *Histoire de la Siounie*, trans. M. Brosset (Saint Petersburg: Academie Imperiale des Sciences, 1864–1866).
21. Ibid., 260.
22. Ōrbelean, *History*, 249; Ut'mazean, *Siwnik'ë*, 265.
23. Dasxuranc'i, *History of the Caucasian Albanians*, 224.
24. Ut'mazean, *Siwnik'ë*, 266.
25. Y. Drasxanakertc'i, *Patmut'awn Hayoc'* [History of Armenians] (Tbilisi: N. Aghanian Press, 1912), 258–59.
26. Ut'mazean, *Siwnik'ë*, 266–67.
27. Ibid., 273–75.
28. Ōrbelean, *History*, 294.
29. Ut'mazean, *Siwnik'ë*, 279.
30. Ibid., 160–61.
31. Ibid., 161–62.
32. Yahyā Ibn Sa'īd al-Anṭākī, *Ta'rikh al-Anṭākī al-Ma'rūf bi-Šilat Ta'rikh Ūtikhā*, trans. 'Umar 'Abddel-Salām Tadmurī (Tripoli, Lebanon: JP Publishers, 1990), 41–43.
33. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī'l-Ta'rikh*, vol. VI, 346. The Ḥamdānid Dynasty (890–1004) was a Shī'ī dynasty that controlled the area from north Syria

- to al-Jazīrah and Moṣul. They claimed to have been the descendants of the ancient Christian tribe of Banū Taghlib from the north of the Arabian Peninsula.
34. Al-Anṭākī, *Ta'riḵh*, 77.
 35. Ibid., 85.
 36. Ibid., 87.
 37. Ibid., 92.
 38. Ibid., 97–99.
 39. Ibid., 115–17.
 40. Ibid., 125.
 41. Ibid., 127.
 42. Ibn Ḥawkal, *Configuration de la Terre*, [Configuration of the Earth] trans. J. H. Kramers and G. Wiet, 2 vols. (Beirut, Lebanon: Commission internationale pour la traduction des chefs-d'œuvre, 1964), vol. II, 347–48.
 43. Step'anos Taronec'i Asolik, *Etienne Asolik de Taron, Histoire Universelle*, trans. F. Maccler, Book III (Paris: Leroux, 1917), 136–37.
 44. Garsoïan, “Independent,” 168.
 45. Ibid., 170–71.
 46. Matthew, *Chronicle*, 21.
 47. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī'l- Ta'riḵh*, 198.
 48. Speros Vryonis Jr., “Manpower in Byzantine and Turkish Societies,” in *Studies on Byzantium, Seljuks, and Ottomans*, ed. Speros Vryonis Jr., 2 vols. vol. II (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1981), 125–52, 130.
 49. Ibid., 132.
 50. Leo, *Collected works*, vol. II, 600.
 51. Ibid., 604–5.
 52. See Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad of Anna Comnena* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Classics, 1969).
 53. See Nersēs Šnorhali, *Ēndhanrakan T'ult'k'* [Encyclical Letters] (Jerusalem: St. Yakob, 1871).
 54. Garsoïan, “Independent,” 166.
 55. For the chronology of the campaigns of Tzimiskes against the Arabs see: Marius Canard, “La date des expéditions Mésopotamiennes de Jean Tzimiscès,” in *Mélanges Henri Gregoire II* (Brussels: 1950), 99–108; Gustave Schlumberger, *L'épopée Byzantine à la fin du dixième siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1896), 281–308. The subject is discussed in Paul Walker, “The ‘Crusade’ of John Tzimiskes in the Light of new Arabic Evidence,” *Byzantion* 47 (1977): 301–27.
 56. Walker, “Crusade,” 303.
 57. Ibid., 311.
 58. Ibid., 321–23.
 59. Matt'ēos Urhayec'i (Matthew of Edessa), *Žamanakagrut'iwn* [Chronicle], trans. H. Bart'ikean (Erevan: State University of Erevan Publications, 1991), 24–35.
 60. Charanis, *Armenians in the Byzantine Empire*, 32–33. Marius Canard, “Histoire de la Dynastie des Hamdanites de Jazira et de Syrie,” *Annales d'Études Orientales de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université d'Alger I* (1961): 736.
 61. Charanis, *Armenians*, 44.

62. Ibid., 34.
63. See Ibid., 36, for their backgrounds.
64. Ibid., 39.
65. Ibid., 42.
66. Ibid., 47.
67. Ibid., 45–46.
68. Matthew, *Chronicle*, 44.
69. Charanis, *Armenians*, 48.
70. Kennedy, *Prophet*, 201.
71. Catherine Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976–1025)* (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 2005), 315.
72. Ibid., 3.
73. Ibid., 319.
74. Ibid., 312.
75. Ibid., 314.
76. Ibid., 321.
77. Ibid., 480.
78. Ibid., 322.
79. Ibid., 531.
80. Ibid., 2.
81. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī'l- Ta'rikh*, vol. VIII, 11.
82. Ibid., vol. VII, 341–42.
83. Matthew, *Chronicle*, 111–13.
84. Ibid., 124–25.
85. Ibid., 140–41.
86. Ibid., 150–51.
87. Ibid., 166–69.
88. Ibid., 172–75.
89. Ibid., 175–93.
90. Ibid., 195–99.
91. Ibid., 207–8.
92. Ibid., 65–67.
93. Ibn al-Atīr, *al-Kāmil fī'l- Ta'rikh*, vol. VII, 207.
94. Redgate, *Armenians*, 210.
95. Aristakēs Lastivertc'i, *Patmut'iwn* [History], trans. V. Geworgean (Erevan: Hayastan Publications, 1971), 91–98.
96. Ibid., 96.
97. Ibid., 89–90.
98. Ibid., 91.
99. Ibid., 91–98.
100. Ibid., 98.
101. Ibid., 89.
102. Grigor Magistros, "Epistle to the Syrian Catholicos," in *Grigor Magistrosi T'it'erē* [Epistles], ed. K. Kostaneantc' (Alexandrapol, 1910), 167–68.
103. Magistros, "Epistle in Reply to the Letter of the Tulaylians, the Remnants of the New Manichaeans and T'onrakians, who had Come to the Catholicos of the Syrians, in an Attempt to Deceive Him," *Epistles*, 165–68.
104. Magistros, "Letter to the Syrian Patriarch," 154.
105. Ibid.

106. Ibid., 155.
107. Ibid., 158.
108. Ibid., 159–62.
109. Ibid., 158–59.
110. See Melik'sēt-Bēk, “Połos Taronec'i and the T'ondrakians,” *Ējmiacin* IV (1960): 38. Also see, Połos Taronec'i, Matenadaran Ms.# 5787, f. 294b.
111. W. Ivanow, *The Truth-Worshippers of Kurdistan and Ahl-i Haqq Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1953), 32.
112. Ibid., 48–57.
113. Ibid., 12.
114. Ibid., 8–9.
115. Ibid.
116. Matti Moosa, *Extremist Shiites: The Ghulat Sects* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 432–35.
117. Charles Wilson, “Notes on the Physical and Historical Geography of Asia Minor,” *Royal Geographical Society* 6 (June 1884): 62.
118. Ibid., 313.
119. Moosa, *Extreme Shiites*, 445.
120. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, 1st ed. (Cairo: Matba'at al-Sa'adah, 1323/1905), 1, 190; Moosa, *Extremist Shiites*, 433–34.
121. *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*. 1325–1354, trans. H. A. R. Gibb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 2, 437.

Summary: The Arguments in Volume One

As the reader who got to this point in Volume One will have realized, this is not a conventional book of history. Many strands of themes, events, disciplines, and sensibilities went into its making. The initial idea of the larger study was depicting a medieval Near Eastern landscape in which Armenians were indigenous, integral, and active elements. The main argument of the book as put forward in the Introduction is as follows: If historical Armenia as well as the modern Republic have always been between central Asia Minor, the southern Caucasus, and the Islamic world, and if until few decades ago, the entire region, from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, the Caspian, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Egypt, was the *oikoumenē* or habitat of most of the Armenians, their history too was naturally part of these locations and peoples. Since Armenian narratives—both medieval and modern—do not reflect this philosophy of Armenian history, they fail to account for the totality of the Armenian experience in all its interactive aspects in and as part of the region. Consequently, so far undetected or intentionally marginalized paradigm cases of interactions stand as counter cases to the circulating narratives. They are “arguments” against them. Chronologically arranged, these paradigm cases reflect intriguing processes and factors, and expand the peripheries of Armenian historical thinking into newer possibilities.

The Introduction suggests a dialectical instead of an essentialist approach to the ongoing Armenian experience in the Islamic world. One of the obstacles before this transformation is what may be called a culture of authority among Armenians. For many Armenians, including scholars and academics, the seeming security-fixed traditions and authority provide are more “useful” than the uncertainties critical approaches may generate. The Armenian experience in the

medieval Near East as well as the modern Middle East was and still is too diverse and complicated. Constructs based on the idea of a persistent and heroic nation are too narrow. Armenian histories should reflect this condition in order to avoid essentialism. Throughout their history, Armenian communities evolved by the requirements of their locations. Every phenomenon must therefore be studied in specific context. For example, just as today American-Armenian communities can only be studied—and are—in local contexts, similarly, medieval Armenian history (after the mid-seventh century) can only be studied and understood in the context of the Islamic world. While no one argues against looking at American-Armenians in American context, fourteen centuries of Armenian experience with Islam is barely touched, in fact it has even been systematically overlooked.

The core of the matter is that there is a politics of Armenian historical writing. A certain philosophy of Armenian history underlies and sustains specific manners of historical thinking and writing and prevents interrogation and analysis of the existing accounts. Surely there are exceptions. There is also a trend among the historians—mostly in the West—who claim to be free from ideology and invest only on the so-called “objective” evidence. Epistemologically weak, this position has been dismissed over a century ago and so-called absolute objectivity about past events is a myth. Furthermore, there are no demarcation lines between history proper and philosophy of history. There is always a philosophical grid of some sort, there are also institutional and individual considerations. Being an Armenologist in these circumstances today, is more than just a self-identification and a self-classification. It means being part of the traditional Armenian politics of truth or a critic of it, being a contributor to the “culture industry” or its adversary and reformer. The arguments in this volume and the book naturally reflect this questioning.

The central argument of Chapter One on “Factors in the Pre-Islamic Armenian Condition” is that the manners in which Armenians (as institutions, classes, trends, and individuals) interacted with cultural and political Islam were shaped by factors already active in the previous centuries. In other words, there is a clear continuity in the patterns of interaction that must be identified and analyzed. Some of the major factors already active prior to the arrival of the Arabs, were the East–West rivalries, the conceptualization of the nation through the fundamental legacies or the loyalties of the Classical

Age, the definition of Armenian orthodoxy/heresy, and beginnings of social–religious dissidence.

In the case of the dissident trends or the sects and in general, there was a massive and continuous phenomenon of medieval revolutionary thought and action. It can easily, rather must be qualified as Medieval Armenian Dissidence. It took shape by the middle of the fourth century and evolved to the end of the middle ages and beyond. Religious heresy was just an aspect, but the phenomenon was a much more inclusive process that was never studied as a singularity and an integral part of Armenian history. A separate study on Armenian dissidence is feasible but not before a comprehensive study where dissidence is shown to be an organic part of the whole. In other words, heterodox and/or “odd” phenomena—such as Muslim Armenians—are as much part of Armenian history as the “orthodox.” Only a holistic approach will detect and place these elements in their natural contexts.

In this respect, the history of Armenian Christianity will only be complete by the inclusion of all its phases and trends. Not all the dissidents were “heretics”; many were simply oppressed and marginal factions, such as slaves and women. There were social reformists who were as “Christian” as anyone of their adversaries. Dissidence was a deliberate often political choice and marked a good amount of sophistication at that time. In Chapter One I observed that the twenty-four canons of the Council of Gangra (374/5) summarized and anticipated what can be qualified as the core of medieval Armenian dissident ideology.

As discussed in Chapter Two on “Early Arab Campaigns and the Regulation of Relations According to the Medinan Legacy,” the Arab Period in Armīnyah lasted four and not two and a half centuries (from 640 to 884), as generally accepted by historians of Armenia. The classification is based on three assumptions that are not supported by the events of the times: the first is assuming that the rise of the first Bagratuni king in 884 caused a radical change in the status quo; the second is assuming Armenia as a clearly defined geographic area by the end of the ninth century; the third is assuming that Armenians totally broke off from the ‘Abbāsīd world and Arab control.

While the East–West conflict continued with force, Arab rule over the entire eastern Asia Minor led to the massive politicization–militarization of Armenian dissidents. It had another consequence

that is rarely mentioned. This was the empowerment of the Church and its politicization too. As discussed in this chapter, with rare exceptions, the Islamic states respected the clergy, places of worship, and monasteries. They were exempted from taxes. Very often it was the clergy that represented the Armenians in negotiations.

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, Armenian history can only be fully studied with an extensive use of Arab sources. Two peculiarities distinguish Arab accounts and justify this insistence on Arab sources: geographic and ethnic. Arab sources are much more expansive and inclusive, because the medieval *Armīnyah* in Arab sources was much bigger than any version of the historic land. The second is the term *armanī* (or Armenian). The word *armanī* referred equally to those who were natives and/or inhabitants of what they called *Armīnyah* and those who were ethnic Armenians who lived elsewhere. Otherwise, there were no restrictions on their religious backgrounds. The term *armanī* was very similar in use and connotation to the word *ʿarabī* or Arab. More importantly, *Armīnyah* and *al-arman* were presented as indigenous elements of the Near East and the narratives did not single them out from the regional texture. Here lay the significance of these sources and the legitimacy of my suggestion to re-evaluate narratives in the context of Near Eastern histories. For example, the entire episode, rather the century of Armenian military and political involvement in al-Shām and Fāṭimid Egypt was lost for Armenian historiography, before my excavation from Arab sources. This was a “paradigm” case. All arguments in this study are based on similar cases that are fully supported by whatever testimonies available in Arab sources. These paradigm cases are so many and so significant that they generate an entirely different Armenian landscape in Near Eastern context.

One of the most novel arguments of Chapter Two concerns the regulation of Armenian–Islamic relations through agreements that were described as peace treatises, oaths, compacts, etc. The 652 treaty between Muʿāwiyah, the governor of al-Shām at that time, and Prince Theodoros R̥štuni, the governor of Armenia should be looked upon not as the first in its kind and in isolation. It is a link in a tradition of Islamic oaths (*ahd*) to the non-Muslims or the *dhimmīs*. This treaty and all others are rooted in the Prophet’s policy toward the non-Muslims formulated during the Medīnan period (from his migration or *Hijrah* to this city in 622, to his death in 632). It is explicit in the Qurʾān as well. Various types of agreements in what may be called “Medīnan”

spirit were reached between Muslim rulers and their non-Muslim subjects.

I have observed that as of the *History* of Sebēos, a contemporary to the early invasions—a literary tradition began in Armenia. According to this tradition, Islamic–Armenian contacts allegedly began twenty years earlier, during the Medinan decade. The two treatises of 652 and 654 were seen as one and as a link in a series that continued to the fifteenth century and later. It was probably referred to in 1605–1606, during the negotiations between Safavid Shāh ‘Abbās and the bishop of the newly established Armenian city of New Julfa near Isfahan. It even echoed in the Ottoman Tanzimat of the nineteenth century.

Since the Christians needed protection, they seem to have produced and circulated texts of alleged agreements to legitimize their demands as per the initial commitment of the Prophet to safeguard the rights of the dhimmī communities. It is impossible to establish the authenticity of circulating texts from the seventh century to the Modern Period. But this is not the point and it cannot serve the case of those who dismiss the entire subject on the basis of the absence of authentic texts. The point is that from the earliest periods of Islam, a tradition was established by the Prophet himself and ratified by the Qur’ān. In Armenian literature at least, this tradition gained a peculiar legitimacy. Sometimes, even some Muslim rulers adopted and implemented its basic terms, whenever beneficial to them. Each text in circulation claimed to be based on the previous one/s—which it cited—and became a link in a continuum. This was a literary process which rightly acquired a historicity of its own and became an aspect of Islamic–Armenian relations. Also, in most of these so-called oaths, Armenian clergy represented the Armenians, hence the peculiarity of the political status of the church in the Islamic state.

Chapter Three on “The Umayyad Period and the Reconfirmation of Oaths” is a brief account of this period. It also suggests a new perspective on Islamic–Armenian interactions. It is the alliance of heterodox Armenians with the Muslim side on the ‘Abbāsīd frontiers land from the late eighth century to the Seljuk Period. This is taken up in Chapter Four titled “The Armenians in the ‘Abbāsīd World—The Paradigms of Borderlands and Dissidence.”

The Borderlands is a major paradigm to explain many aspects and elements of Armenian and Near Eastern history during the Arab Period. An important part of Medieval Islamic–Armenian history must be studied in the context and by the paradigms of the Borderlands.

This region was an appropriate milieu for indigenous Near Eastern syncretistic cultures to persist, even flourish. On these territories, all dichotomies were blurred and extraordinary patterns of life proliferated. Paulician and T'ondrakian histories are in fact part of the Borderlands episode and territories from the ninth to the twelfth centuries and later. In medieval Arab histories, the region surfaces only partially in the accounts of Byzantine–Arab wars. Otherwise, there are very intriguing instances of a unique place and period. For example, in the context of 'Abbāsīd campaigns in 857/242H, Ibn al-Athīr almost casually speaks of Muslim Armenian army general 'Alī Ibn Yaḥyā al-Armanī, and his “allies” the Paulician leader Karbeas and 'Umar Ibn 'Abdallāh al-Aqṭā of Melitene. In 861, these three formidable men were fighting the Byzantines as a coalition. Few if anyone has noticed that the first was a Muslim Armenian, the other was a Paulician Armenian (who probably converted to Islam), and the third was a local amīr—not an 'Abbāsīd-appointed official. One should also remember that at least half of their fighters were Armenian, be they Muslim or Paulician. These were the realities on the Borderlands and at the time were “normal” for the people involved but not the mainstream Armenian histories neither then and nor now.

The Borderlands became an appropriate milieu for another paradigm, that of Near Eastern syncretism and popular cultures. The Byzantine epic of *Digenis Akritis* is an artistic expression which also has a peculiar historicity. Circumstances on the peripheries of the both the Caliphate and Byzantium-generated new social types, such as the Paulician *astatoi* (unstable, vagrants, vagabonds) and the later militant “brigands,” “bandits.” Their role in regional history awaits study. Another important subject of the ninth century is the link between the Irano-Islamic sects and the T'ondrakians. The so-called heresy was only a vague description of widespread dissident movements of many ethnic backgrounds and faiths, which also entertained mixed beliefs and customs. These trends were in constant contact and collaboration, hence the link, for example, between T'ondrakism and its contemporary Khurramīd Babak's movement. In this context, Armenian–Ismā'īlī relations and doctrinal affinities are also suggested and briefly discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Five dealt with the Armenian Dynastic Principalities or the Age of Kingdoms. One of the major themes is the connection between the imperial and religious politics of the Christian rulers, be they Byzantine, Armenian, or Frankish. In this respect, the Syrian

expedition of John Tzimiskes, 125 years before the Crusaders, is a paradigm. Irrespective of the discrepancies between the rhetoric and the achievements, the claim to liberate the Holy City and the Christians from the “infidels” reflected the political space at that time and fixed a banner for subsequent Christian politics in the Islamic world and the legacy of the “sword and cross,” and “king and monk.” The last section of this chapter proposes different perspectives on dissident uprisings and reformist movements during the tenth century in the Armenian world, east and west and major figures such as Bishop Yakobos and Grigor Narekac’i.

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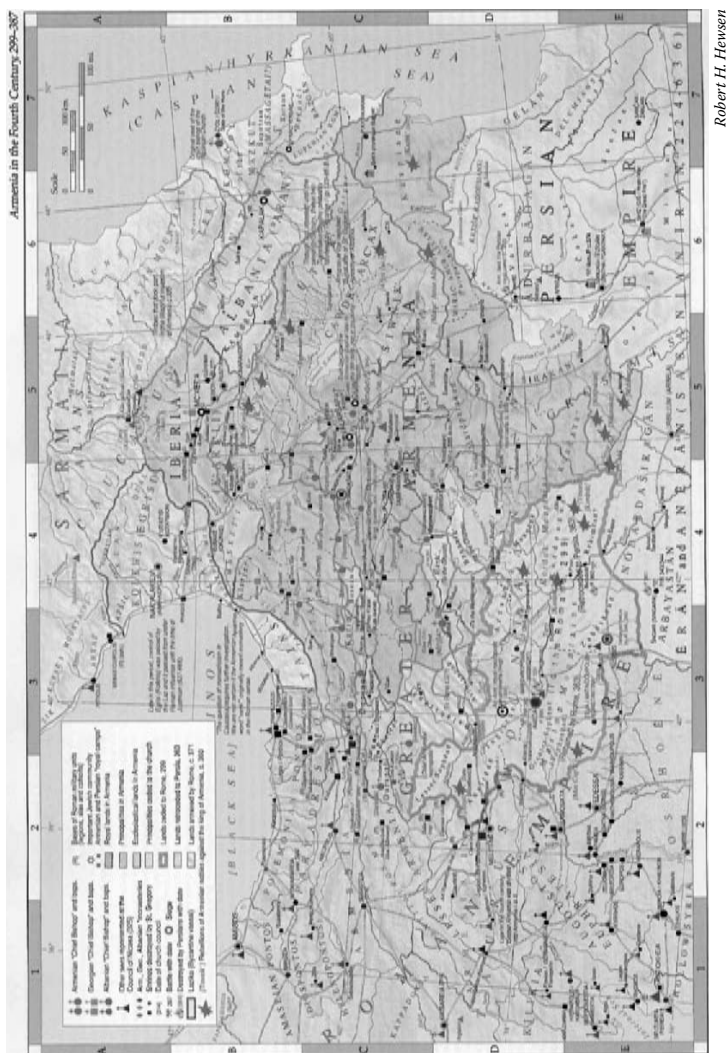
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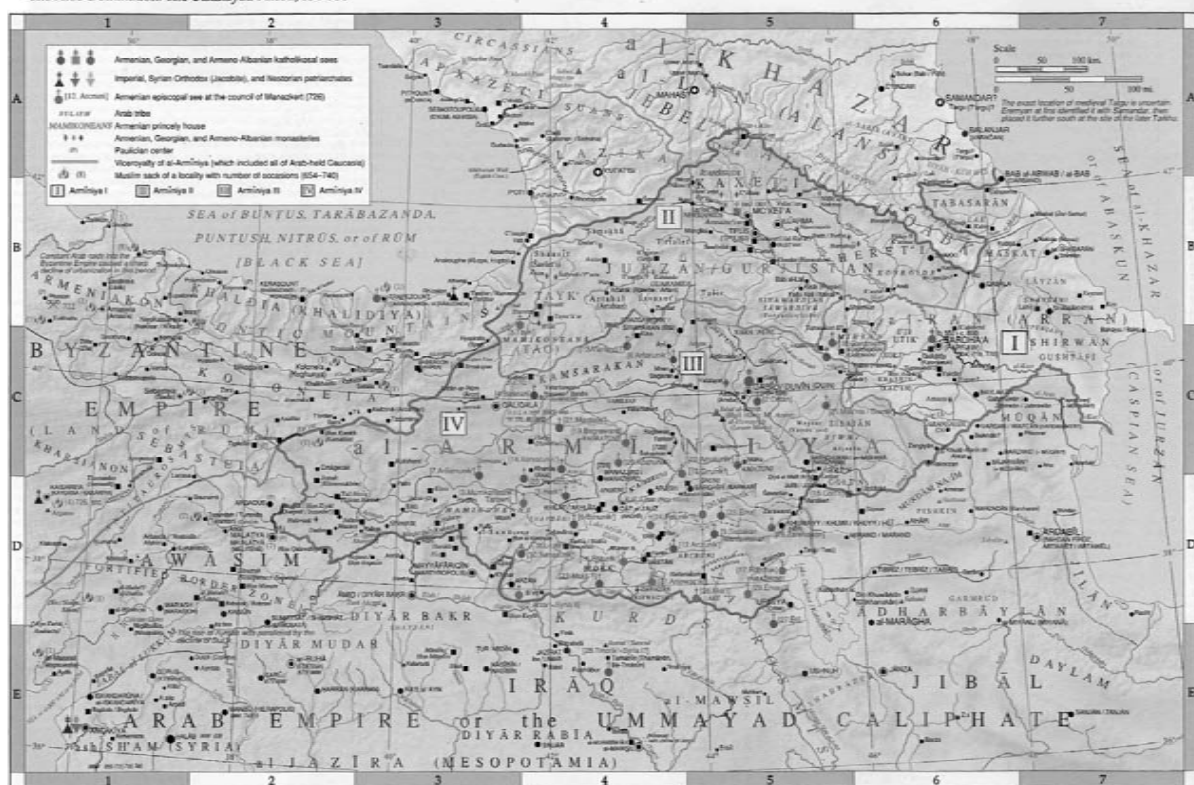
Appendix

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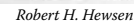


Robert H. Hewsen

The Arab Domination: The Ummayyad Period, 654-750



Robert H. Hewsen



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